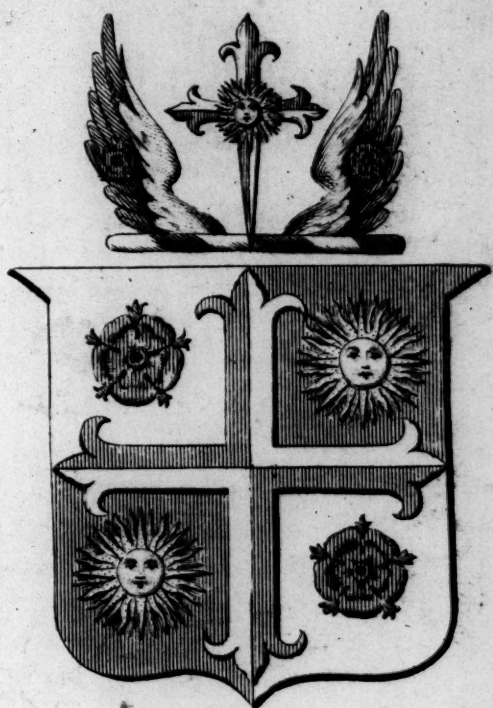




William Bentham Esq.^r

Barrister at Law

E.A.S. & F.L.S.

1066. f. 6.

372

THE
CANTERBURY TALES

O F
CHAUCER;

COMPLETED IN A MODERN VERSION.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

Dan Chaucer, well of English undefil'd,
On Fame's eternal bead-roll worthy to be fil'd.

Dan Geffrey, in whose gentle spright
The pure well-head of poetry did dwell.

SPENSER.

OXFORD:

Printed for J. COOKE;

And G. G. and J. ROBINSON, Paternoster Row, London.

MDCCXCV.

TO THE

REV. DR. WATSON

LATE HEAD MASTER OF WINCHESTER SCHOOL

In testimony of the high regard in which
who feels every day that he owes
his instructions to the high regard in which
he has ever held you, and the high regard in which
he bears you, and the high regard in which
in their service to the high regard in which
false, the following
your Trust is hereby

4³⁸ 6
9



His Master's Servant

And humble servant

W. LITSCOMB

TO THE
REV. DR. WARTON,

LATE HEAD-MASTER OF WINCHESTER SCHOOL.

IN testimony no less of the gratitude of one, who feels every day how much he owes to his instructions, than of the respect which he, in common with all lovers of polite letters, bears necessarily to a writer who has exerted in their service so fine a fancy and so just a taste, the following Version of the Canterbury Tales is inscribed, by

His sincere admirer,
And humble servant,

W. LIPSCOMB.

THE FINE ARTS

THE following is a list of the
works of art in the collection
of the Fine Arts Society
which have been made up
to the present time. The
list is given in the order
of the number of the
works, and the names of
the artists are given in
the margin. The list is
given in the order of the
number of the works, and
the names of the artists
are given in the margin.

P R E F A C E.

THE following collection of the Canterbury Tales, now first completed in a modern version, is offered to the public under the reasonable confidence, that the improved taste in poetry, and the extended cultivation of that, in common with all the other elegant arts, which so strongly characterizes the present day, will make the lovers of verse look up to the old Bard, the Father of English poetry, with a veneration proportioned to the improvements they have made in it.

The gratitude of men has in all ages been excited towards those great benefactors of the human race, the inventors of arts; and it has ever made one of their most conspicuous employments to erect temples to their honour: but, by a fatality almost unexampled, the venerable subject of these pages has found

found the *Temple of Fame* (so peculiarly his own) crumble from around his shrine: the materials with which it was built were of too perishable a nature to support the pretensions he so justly makes to immortality; in a word, the language, in which he wrote, hath decayed from under him. It is this reason, and this alone, that can justify the attempt of exhibiting him in a modern dress; and though, with respect to translations in general, I assent to the position that they should be rather free than servile, yet in that part of the present work, which has fallen to my share to execute, I have endeavoured to adhere to the great original the more faithfully, from the consideration that all those readers (a very numerous as well as a very respectable class) who have not given their time to the study of the old language, must either find a true likeness of Chaucer exhibited in this version, or they will find it no where else. This is not the case with respect to the writers in the dead languages: so long as those languages shall be cultivated, the student of taste may have recourse to the original author,

thor, rather elucidated by criticism than impaired by time: but the fluctuating state, and progressive improvements made in living tongues, lessens the ardour, and reduces every day the number of those who study the most ancient, and leaves to the professed antiquary the almost exclusive possession of them. Hence I have imposed it on myself, as a duty somewhat sacred, to deviate from my original as little as possible in the sentiment, and have often in the language adopted his own expressions, the simplicity and effect of which have always forcibly struck me, whenever the terms he uses (and that happens not unfrequently) are intelligible to modern ears.

In some other parts of the transcript I have not thought myself tied down to the same fidelity: the grossness and indelicacy of the times in which Chaucer lived extended their coarse influence to writers, we well know, much posterior to him; and therefore we cannot wonder, that the stream, which took such a length of time to depurate, should be turbid at its very source. But though we
may

may excuse the writer, who in a work confessedly popular yields what may be hoped to have been his better judgment to the taste of the times he lives in; yet our veneration for his great and various excellencies is rather the more testified, by purging him from his impurities, and by exhibiting him to a more refined age a safe as well as a brilliant example of native genius.

In the following copy of him, it is hoped, as it is believed, that the pruning away of his indelicacies will not be found to have robbed him of any thing valuable, neither will the truth of the likeness appear to have been violated, since the exhibiting him free from stains has been effected scrupulously by the omission of the offensive passages, and not by the presumption to substitute fresh matter.

It is proper here to observe, that this omission hath extended to the two most exceptionable of his Tales (those of the Miller and the Reeve); both of which being highly indelicate, as well in the sentiments as in the language, are wholly omitted in this collection. These having been removed, the improper passages

passages that remained occasionally interspersed in the other tales were comparatively very few; but few as they were, they operated as a just bar against their general reception: that bar, it is humbly hoped, will be found now to be removed, and readers of every denomination may have safe access to a writer, whom every successive British poet, of the first class and genius, hath looked up to with admiration.

That part of the following work which has never yet appeared in a modern dress, commences with the Franklein's Tale, and extends (with exception only to that of the Pardoner, which was printed in 1792) to the end.

The former tales were collected by Mr. Ogle, in the year 1741, who himself translated many of them. The Life of Chaucer, and the Introductory Discourse to the Canterbury Tales, are taken from the valuable edition of his original works published by Mr. Tyrwhitt.

I must beg to trespass on the reader's patience yet a moment longer, to give my reasons,

sons, why I have not paid that attention, which it deserved, to what has been suggested to me by respectable authorities both public as well as private; I mean, to accompany this work with a fresh body of notes.

Though the version itself has been an agreeable and easy rural occupation, yet in a remote village, near 250 miles from London, the very books, trifling as they may seem, to which it would be necessary to refer, to illustrate the manners of the 14th century, were not to be procured; and parochial and other engagements would not admit of absence sufficient to consult them where they are to be found: it is not therefore for want of deference to the opinions of those, who have recommended a body of notes, that they do not accompany these Tales, but for want solely of proper materials. I have subjoined Mr. Tyrwhitt's strictures on each Tale, and such notes as I thought would be acceptable to the Reader from his valuable edition.

W. L.

Jan. 24, 1794.

P O S T S C R I P T.

I HAVE barely time here, the Tales being already almost all printed off, to apologize to the Reader for having inserted my own translation of the Nun's Priest's Tale, instead of that of Dryden: but the fact was, I did not know that Dryden's version existed; for, having undertaken to complete those of the Canterbury Tales which were wanting in Ogle's collection, and the Tale in question not being in that collection, I proceeded to supply it, having never till very lately, strange as it may seem, seen the volume of Dryden's Fables, in which it may be found.

Having inserted the Tale of Melibeus as a specimen of Chaucer's manner in prose, I have forbore to add that of the Person, with which the Collection ought properly to have concluded, because I did not wish to swell the work with what was dry and unentertaining. —In the original the more curious Reader may at any time have access to it.

W. L.

Aug. 25, 1794.

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THE
L I F E
OF

GEOFFREY CHAUCER.

GEOFFREY CHAUCER, the Father of our English poets, and the first great improver and reformer of our language, flourished in the 14th century; and, as he justly obtained the highest admiration amongst his contemporaries, so his memory has ever since been highly honoured. One would imagine from this that every historical circumstance relating to him, or at least those of the greatest moment, should be well preserved, and be perfectly clear, which however is so far from being the case, that nothing can hitherto be certainly determined concerning his descent, or so much as who was his father. Leland says that he

was of a noble stock, Pitts that he was the son of a knight, Speght that his father was a vintner, Hearne that he was a merchant; and the fifth and last opinion, which is the best, is, that nothing can be said with any tolerable assurance of his family at all, but that there is somewhat more probability of his being the son of a gentleman rather than of a tradesman*.

The

* *Rather than of a tradesman.*] It is a point well agreed amongst our ancient authors, that the French surname of this family, which was variously written, as for instance, Chaucier, Chaucierris, Chauffier, Chausir, &c. signified a shoemaker; but notwithstanding this, it is very well known that the founder of this family in England was a Norman chief that came over with William the Conqueror, as appears by the roll of Battle-Abbey; and in succeeding times there were several persons of note of this name mentioned in our records. In the reign of King John there was one Le Chausir, as appears by the records in the Tower; and in the reign of Henry III. one Elias Chaucefir, who in the reign following, viz. Edward I. had a grant of ten shillings from the Treasury; there was also one John Chaucer, of whom King Edward I. heard a complaint for a thousand pounds: but all this gives us no kind of certainty in respect to our Author's family at all. Leland contents himself with hinting that he was of a genteel extraction, *nobili loco natus*, are his words; and it is said that he is faithfully copied by Bale: but this is to be understood of the later editions of his book; for in the first he calls him Sir Geoffrey Chaucer, Knight, and says nothing of his family at all; afterwards he met with Leland's book, and abridged his account of him. John Pitts is very clear that he was of an exceeding good family, and not only a knight himself, but his father a knight before him: but his authority goes for little,

The place of his birth is as much disputed, but however may be determined with greater appearance of

little, more especially with those that know him best. Mr. Speght is of opinion that one Richard Chaucer was his father, who was a vintner at the corner of Kirton-Lane, and dying in 1348, left his house, tavern, and stock, to the church of St. Mary Aldermary, where he was buried. This passed currently with Fuller, and perhaps the better because it furnished him with a very silly jest; "His father," says he, "was a vintner in London; and I have heard his arms quarrelled at being *argent* and *gules*, strangely contrived, and hard to be blazoned: some more wits have made it the dashing of white and red wine (the parents of our ordinary claret), as nicking his father's profession." Against this opinion, however, there lie two exceptions, that solidier heads than his have not been able to get over; the first is, that there was something very unnatural in this vintner's leaving all his estate to the church while his son was at the university; and the second, that Chaucer should never complain of this, or, for any thing that we can discover, feel the effects of it, since it is evident enough that in his youth he lived at a rate that could not have been supported without a fortune. The industrious Mr. Hearne thinks it probable his father was a merchant of London; but the last writer of his life thinking that father not good enough for him, hath found him out a better, one Sir John Chaucer, for which he has no other evidence than that such a man lived at a time when our poet might possibly have been his son. I must confess I think he was of a good family, and that for various reasons, which, because I do not know they have been taken notice of before, I will mention as briefly as I can. First then, his education speaks him a gentleman bred at both the Universities, travelled through several countries, and at last a student

of truth; for though Bale says he was a Berkshire man, and Pitts would entitle Oxfordshire to his birth, yet if we may rely upon what he tells us himself (*Test. of Love*), it is much more likely that he drew his first breath in the city of London; and that he had a great interest amongst its inhabitants is a thing as certain as that it drew upon him many misfortunes, notwithstanding which his having that interest seems to be a corroborating proof of his being a citizen's son*.

The

dent in the Temple, where it is reported that he was fined two shillings for beating a friar in Fleet-street. Next, his post at court shews him to have been a gentleman, for birth was much stood upon in those days, and young men of the best quality were the King's pages. Thirdly, this is confirmed by his marriage, which so proud a man as John of Gaunt would not have admitted, if he had been of a mean descent, much less have recommended him to his wife, and thereby made him the uncle-in-law of his own children. Fourthly, his writings shew him a gentleman, for they are all written with such freedom and spirit as must have exposed him to great envy if he had not been a gentleman, and which he would probably have appeased by some reasonable apology. Lastly, the company he kept, and the respect that was constantly paid him, seem the clearest testimonies of this, which with the rest I submit to the decision of the intelligent reader.

* *Of his being a citizen's son.*] It seems to have been a doubt with Leland whether Oxfordshire or Berkshire produced this great man;

The time of his birth is pretty well fixed, for most of the writers who mention it agree that it was in the second year of Edward III. A. D. 1328.

Here

man; but he thought he had reason to think that he was born in one of those counties. If Berkshire was to be preferred, then Dunnington would bid the fairest for it, which was certainly Chaucer's seat; but then it seems to be no less certain that he purchased it from Sir Richard Adderbury. Pitts affirms roundly that he was born at Woodstock; and Camden, speaking of that place, says that, having nothing in it else remarkable, it boasts of having produced our English Homer, Geoffrey Chaucer: but he was too knowing a man to credit this; he knew the reason of it to be that Chaucer had a house there, and Ewelme and Hocknorton in the same county were also belonging to his family, and might therefore with as much justice as Woodstock put in a claim to his birth. But Chaucer himself seems to have determined the point as clearly as man could do; for, speaking of the troubles that had happened in this place, he says, "The city of London, that is to me so dear and sweet, in which I was forth-grown; and more kindly love have I to that place than any other on earth, as every kindly creature hath full appetite to that place of his kindly engendruer," &c. and therefore Camden very justly takes occasion, speaking of another poet, to affirm that London was our Author's birth-place: "Edmund Spenser," says he, "a Londoner, was so smiled on by the Muses at his birth, that he excelled all the English poets that went before him, if we except only his fellow-citizen Chaucer." It may seem a little difficult to reconcile what is said in this note to what has been advanced in the former; and yet it may be done tolerably well; for though we now consider a citizen of London as a trader of course, yet in the times when Chaucer lived,

Here again we fall into the dark ; for as to his earlier years, we know not where or how they were spent ; but as soon as he was fit for academical studies, he was sent to Cambridge, where he gave early testimonies of his abilities by several elegies and sonnets, as well as by a poem called *The Court of Love*, which he composed when he was about eighteen, and which carries in it very pregnant proofs of skill and learning, as well as quickness of wit and great

men of great quality and distinction resided in the city, where the court was also kept, and therefore he might very well be in this sense the son of an inhabitant of London, and still his father might not be either merchant or vintner, but in some post about the court ; and this in so dark a matter, and which has employed so many learned pens, without letting in much light upon it, seems the most probable account of the matter : for in that discourse in which he speaks of London as his birth-place, he very clearly confesses that he had been but too deeply engaged in the popular disturbances that happened there, through his attachment to his patron the Duke of Lancaster, which shews the interest he had among the people ; and yet he affirms that in what he did he had no evil intention, much less meant to throw all things into confusion ; and offers it as a reason why he should be believed in declaring this, that he was a native of London, and loved it better than any place upon earth, as every creature naturally does the place from which it springs. After clearing up these points as far as possible, we shall be more brief in our remarks upon other points of this history, though a large and full life of Chaucer seems to be a work still wanting to the learned world, after all the pains that has been hitherto taken about it.

strength

strength of genius *. It is not by any means certain in what college or hall of that university he studied :
but

* *And great strength of genius.*] The most certain accounts we have of Chaucer are those taken from his own writings, in which there are a great variety of circumstances that occur not in any of the ancient relations of his life, insomuch that it is very doubtful whether we should ever have heard any thing of his being a student at Cambridge, if he had not left us that particular himself. In like manner it might have been presumed, but it could hardly have been proved, that his Court of Love was not his first performance, or at least his first performance that made any great figure. But from the perusal of this poem we learn from himself, that he had written many things before in honour of the deity of Love. Indeed the poem itself speaks it probable; for though we have a very high idea of the natural genius of Chaucer, yet it would be impossible to persuade any judge of poetry that this was his first essay; for not only the structure of the poem manifests an extraordinary skill in that kind of writing, but the harmony of his numbers, even at this distance of time, sufficiently shew that they could not fall from the pen of an unpractised poet. It is generally believed, upon the credit I apprehend of the rubrick placed at the head of this performance, that it was written in imitation of *The Romant of the Rose*; but I must confess I am not very well satisfied of that, and should rather be of opinion that our Author composed it after the manner of those Italian poems that were then so generally esteemed, and for which the famous Francis Petrarch had been crowned some years before with great solemnity at Rome. The honours which that celebrated poet acquired, and which he had never acquired but in an age of the greatest gallantry, excited all who had any turn that way to emulate his performances. We may very
B 4 plainly

but it is conjectured, and not without some shew of reason, that it might be in Solere's Hall, which he has so particularly and humorously described in his story of The Miller of Trompington.

He removed from Cambridge, for reasons which we find no where assigned, to the University of Oxford, and completed his studies there, some say at Canterbury College, which however is improbable, since it was not founded till Chaucer was thirty-five

plainly perceive, in this work of Chaucer's, that he meant to make his entrance by it into the region of Parnassus, and boldly resolved, on the strength of his own judgment as well as of his genius, to declare himself a poet, and put himself that way into the road to fame. If this had not been his intention, he would have scarce written The Court of Love, the ground of which poem is to shew that it was a tribunal to which every man owed obedience, which sooner or later he was obliged to pay. As for himself, he professes that he was summoned to do suit and service at the age of eighteen, which affords him an opportunity of describing the Court, the manner of its proceedings, and the statutes of Love by which those proceedings are regulated. This poem is very long, consisting of upwards of fourteen hundred verses, and concludes with the festival of Love, which with great elegance our poet fixes upon the 1st of May, and makes it celebrated by the birds: yet this part of the poem is the most exceptionable of any, and shews what a strange taste prevailed in that age; for in this festival not only the hymns of the church, but the Psalms themselves are very scandalously profaned, and applied to the god of Love and his mother, which shews the bad consequences that naturally flow from superstitious devotion.

years

years of age; others in Merton College, which is more likely; for though his name does not appear among the celebrated members of it at that time, yet we find most of his contemporaries, as Strode, Occleve, &c. were of that College. After a considerable stay here, and a strict application to the publick lectures of the university, he became, as Leland tells us, a ready logician, a smooth rhetorician, a pleasant poet, a grave philosopher, an ingenious mathematician, and a holy divine. That he was a great master in astronomy is plain from his Discourses of the Astrolabe; that he was versed in the Hermetick philosophy appears by his Tale of the Chanon's Yeoman; his knowledge in divinity is evident from his Parson's Tale; and his philosophy from the Testament of Love.

After he left this university, he travelled abroad through France and the Low Countries, in order to see the world, and to improve the knowledge which he had acquired from books: but when he went abroad, or at what time he returned, are circumstances not easy to be determined. Yet sure there is a probability that he spent not many years out of his own country, since the best writers seem to be well satisfied that after his return he entered himself of the
Middle

Middle Temple, and became a student there of the municipal laws of this land. Of this learning having received some tincture, he betook himself to the court, which was indeed the place in the world fittest for a man of his accomplishments to thrive in. His first employment there was in quality of the King's Page, in those times a very honourable office, as it gave near and frequent access to the royal presence: but one would imagine this was not a post to which any but a young man could be advanced upon his coming to court, and therefore it seems most consistent with truth to believe that Geoffrey Chaucer could not at his admittance exceed thirty*.

At

* *Could not at that time exceed thirty.*] We have intimated in the text, that our Author seems to have owed his admittance into the King's service in quality of Page, which in the Latin of those times was called *valettus* or *valectus*, an honour that young noblemen of the first rank were glad to accept, to the favour of the King's son, John of Gaunt, afterwards Duke of Lancaster, of which no notice is taken by any of those who have hitherto collected the memoirs of his life. Yet we do not assert this without authority; for it appears by a poem of his called Chaucer's Dream, first printed in the year 1597, that he was very deep in this young prince's amorous secrets; for that poem is an allegorical history of the loves of John of Gaunt and Blanch of Lancaster, daughter of Henry Duke of Lancaster, which from this very poem it appears were managed with the utmost secrecy, till by a long train of intrigues and solicitations all the obstacles

in

At this time the English court was the most gay and splendid in Europe. Edward III. a prince equally distinguished by civil and martial virtues, sat then upon the throne, blessed with an illustrious consort, by whom he had a numerous posterity. His many victories had rendered him famous abroad, and his moderation and clemency, his reverence for the

in the way of this match were got over, and with the help of the King's consent and the Pope's dispensation they were married in May 1359, which as it was the first introduction to John of Gaunt's vast power and greatness, so it seems to have been the beginning of our Author's fortunes at court; at least it is certain that the knowledge he had of this affair was what made him equally the favourite of the Duke of Lancaster and of the Duchess Blanch, who, as the highest testimony of her friendship, gave him the sister of her favourite lady in marriage, which is also intimated at the close of this poem. But this is quite a different thing from another under the same title, that in the old manuscripts is and ought to be entitled *The Book of the Duchess*, written not upon her marriage, but upon her death; and this being wrote in the manner of a vision, and the other not being discovered, came to be called *Chaucer's Dream*, because that title appeared in some old lists of his Works. As the credit of the Duke of Lancaster increased with his father, Chaucer's also rose in a like proportion; for he continued steady to his patron to the last hour of that duke's life; and indeed, considering his alliance, as well as his obligations, we need not at all wonder that he did: but after saying all this, it will be very proper to add, that, notwithstanding his fidelity to his patron, he did not go all lengths with him, but kept exactly within the bounds of loyalty to his prince, as well as those of duty to his benefactor.

laws,

laws, and his kindness for his people, made him beloved at home; so that our chronicles boast of few reigns more glorious, and of none brighter, than his. Among other great qualities with which this famous monarch was endued, his love of learning and learned men was not the least conspicuous; and therefore we need not wonder that our Author, who was continually giving some specimen or other of the vivacity of his parts, wrought himself into high favour, insomuch that it appears that he was a constant attendant on the court, and when it was at Woodstock resided at a square stone house near the park-gate, which still retains his name; and well indeed it may, since being consecrated in his poems, the whole country round about is become, in respect to Englishmen, a kind of classick ground*.

But

* *A kind of classick ground.*] In order to justify this, we need only observe that many of the rural descriptions that occur in his Works are taken from Woodstock-Park, of which he tells us, that it was a park walled with green stone, that being the first park walled in England, and not many years before his time. In most of his pieces where he designs an imaginary scene, he certainly copies it from a real landscape; so in his Cuckoo and Nightingale, the morning walk he takes was such as at this day may be traced from his house through part of the park, and down by the brook into the vale under Blenheim-Castle, as certainly

But besides his employment about the person of his prince, our poet took pains to advance his fortune by attaching himself to the service of John of Gaunt Duke of Lancaster, by whom and by his Duchess Blanch, a lady equally remarkable for her wit and

tainly as we may assert that maples instead of phyllereas were the ornaments round the bower, which place he likewise describes in his Dream, as a white castle standing upon a hill, the scene in that poem being laid in Woodstock-Park. When disengaged from publick affairs, his time was entirely spent in studying and walking: so agreeable to him was this exercise, that he says he preferred it to all other sports and diversions. He lived within himself, neither desirous to hear, nor busy to concern himself with, the affairs of his neighbours. His course of living was temperate and regular; he went to rest with the sun, and rose before it, and by that means enjoyed the pleasures of the better part of the day, his morning walk and fresh contemplations. This gave him the advantage of describing the morning in so lively a manner as he does every where in his Works; the springing sun glows warm in his lines, and the fragrant air blows cool in his descriptions; we smell the sweets of the bloomy haws, and hear the musick of the feathered choir, whenever we take a forest walk with him. The hour of the day is not easier to be discovered from the reflection of the sun in Titian's paintings than in Chaucer's morning landscapes. 'Tis true those descriptions are sometimes too long, and, as it is before observed, when he takes those early rambles, he almost tires his reader with following him, and seldom knows how to get out of a forest when once entered into it; but how advantageous this beautiful extravagance is most of his successors well know, who have very plentifully lopt off his exuberant beauties, and placed them as the chief ornaments of their own writings.

virtue,

virtue, he was exceedingly beloved; nor was it long before he became part of their family also. It happened thus. This Duchess entertained in her service one Catharine Rouet, daughter of Sir Payne or Pagan Rouet, a native of Hainault, and Guien King at Arms for that country, who was afterwards married to Sir Hugh Swynford, a knight of Lincoln. He lived not long after their marriage, and upon his decease this lady returned into the Duke's family, and was appointed governess of his children. She had a sister whose name was Philippa, a great favourite likewise with the Duke and Duchess, and by them therefore, as a mark of their great esteem, recommended to Chaucer for a wife. He married her about the year 1360, when he was in the flower of his age, and, as appears from a picture of him taken about that time, one of the handsomest persons about the court, of a complexion fair and beautiful, his lips very red and full, his size of a just proportion, his air very graceful and majestic. We live at too great a distance of time to be able to penetrate with certainty into the true motives of our Author's match; but sure there is a great probability that he was not unacquainted with the tenderness which his patron the Duke of Lancaster had for the Lady Swynford, by whom

whom he had several children, who were afterwards legitimated by act of parliament. Yet this alliance was not the only tie he had upon that prince, one of the most ambitious and artful men of his time, and always embarked in some state-intrigue or other, and therefore above all things fond of having men of parts and literature about him, of whom he might make use as occasion offered, and in which capacity as there was none more able, so it appears there were none did him greater service than Chaucer.

Being thus supported, we need not wonder that his fortunes made a very quick progress at court, and accordingly we find very many marks of his master King Edward's kindness towards him; as for instance, in the 41st year of his reign he granted him an annuity of twenty marks *per annum* out of the Exchequer. How mean soever such a pension may seem now, it was then very considerable, and in Chaucer's case was still the more valuable as being an earnest of future favours; for not long after we find him Gentleman of the King's Privy-Chamber, and by that title the King granted to him, by letters patent, dated in the 45th year of his reign, the further sum of twenty marks *per annum* during his life.

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In this station he did not long continue, being next year made Shieldbearer to the King, a title at that time, though now extinct, of great honour, such persons being always next the King's person, and generally upon signal victories rewarded with military honours. Neither were these all the instances he received of the King's attention to and confidence in him; for in the very same year, and by the same title, we find him commissioned, in conjunction with other persons, to treat with the republick of Genoa; and accordingly thither he went, and actually managed a negotiation, concerning the subject of which those who have written our Author's life make not the least mention, but seem to treat it as a matter, at this distance of time, altogether inexplicable. But it may from the history of that prince's reign be very probably inferred that Chaucer was sent to Genoa to hire ships for the King's navy; for in those times though we frequently made great naval armaments, yet we had but very few ships of our own; and this defect was supplied by hiring them from the free states either in Germany or Italy. In this negotiation our Author succeeded so well, that, upon his return home, he received new marks of his royal master's favour, for by letters patent, dated at Windsor the 23d of April,

April, in the 48th year of his reign, his Majesty granted him a pitcher of wine daily in the Port of London, to be delivered by the Butler of England; and very soon after he was made Comptroller of the Customs in the Port of London for wool, wool-fells, and hides, with a proviso that he should personally execute that office, and keep the accounts of it with his own hand. As this was a very lucrative, so it was a very reputable employment likewise; and as Chaucer was enriched by the profits of his post, so his reputation was very much increased by that diligence and integrity with which he discharged it. He values himself, as he had reason to do, very much upon his conduct in this office, which he affirms was never liable to any kind of imputation. And indeed it is highly probable that what he has delivered upon this subject is strictly true; for in the latter end of King Edward's reign there were great frauds and embezzlements committed in the Customs, which by prosecutions were brought to publick view; but we do not find that in these Chaucer's name was so much as mentioned. About a year after he was in possession of this office, the King made him a grant of the lands and body of Sir Edmund Staplegate, son of Sir Edmund Staplegate of Kent, in ward, for which he re-

ceived one hundred and four pounds; and other pecuniary advantages he had, which enabled him to raise all together an income of one thousand pounds *per annum*, which was in those days a prodigious sum, and might well enable him to live, as he says he did, with dignity in office, and with good will amongst his neighbours. But as all these benefits arose chiefly from the favour in which he stood with the potent and ambitious Duke of Lancaster, so he became daily more and more involved in the political intrigues of that active and ambitious prince. It is suggested by many of our historians, that this duke had cast a longing eye upon the crown; and it is attributed to this, that about the time our Author was sent to Genoa, the King declared, in full parliament, the young Prince Richard, the only surviving son of Edward the Black Prince, heir-apparent to the crown. But there seems to be a plainer and more natural reason for the King's taking this step, in which none more readily concurred than the Duke of Lancaster; and that was his own and his son's going abroad to carry on the war in France, upon which occasion it was requisite that the succession should be settled; and therefore the young Prince Richard was not only declared heir-apparent, but the government of the kingdom

kingdom was, nominally at least, intrusted with him during the absence of his grandfather, his father, and uncles. But what seems to be a stronger proof of the Duke of Lancaster's innocence in this respect, was his marrying, upon the decease of his Duchess Blanch, the Lady Constantia, daughter of Peter the Cruel, King of Castile and Leon, in whose right upon the decease of her father he assumed those royal titles. This must be allowed to be a mark of his ambition, and of his inclination to be a king; but at the same time it is a proof that he had another crown in view than that of England, and therefore to this we may well ascribe that device of his, of an eagle endeavouring with his bill to undo a footlock, which many of our writers, with more malignity than judgment, have construed into a kind of treason. It is however true that after the decease of his eldest brother, Edward the Black Prince, he was associated by his father in the government, and had the principal direction of publick affairs, which, considering his age, his experience, and his very near relation to the crown, may be looked upon as a thing rather natural than extraordinary.

In this happy season of his life, when he enjoyed all the blessings this world could afford, Chaucer com-

posed most of those gay and lively pieces which were so much adapted to the humour of these times, and to that romantick spirit of love and fighting which in those days were so much in vogue, and by which he acquired so great and so extensive a reputation for his wit and for his capacity in writing *. But it was not long before he found himself obliged to turn his thoughts to graver subjects; for his patron the Duke of

* *And for his capacity in writing.*] We have already mentioned some of the performances of our Author while a very young man, and also some of those pieces that he wrote to compliment the Duke of Lancaster and his Dukes. We will here take an opportunity of giving an account of some other pieces of his that were wrote within the time of his greatest prosperity. The Complaint of Mary Magdalen, taken from Origen, was translated either before or soon after his coming to court, perhaps to oblige some pious lady of those times, as he wrote that which is called Chaucer's A, B, C, for the use of the Dukes Blanch. The Complaint of the Black Knight was penned in honour of John of Gaunt's courtship of that lady, and is as elegant and harmonious a poem as any of our Author's composition, so that it is reasonable to believe he took extraordinary pains about it; and perhaps it would be no unreasonable conjecture if we should suppose that it was written upon his first admission to the intimacy of that great prince, who is represented under the character of the Black Knight. The House of Fame is also a most admirable performance, as well in the construction of the fable as in the ease and happiness of its execution, of which there cannot be a higher testimony than Mr. Pope's borrowing from thence the model of his Temple of Fame, which will probably

of Lancaster having espoused the cause of Wickliffe, whom the clergy considered as a heretick, Chaucer inclined

bably be esteemed as long as there is either taste or poetry in this nation. The Assembly of Fowls was written while he was at court, and before the death of King Edward's queen Philippa; and so was his tale of The Cuckoo and the Nightingale, in which, as was observed in the preceding note, the scene is visibly laid in Woodstock-Park. He likewise wrote abundance of elegies, poems, or ballads, in honour of Margaret Countess of Pembroke, and other ladies of the court; and as it is natural to suppose that he was not the only person who wrote things of this kind, so, by an accident common enough to great men, all of those pieces which have survived the injuries of time are come down to us under the name of Chaucer, though it might be very easily proved that they are none of his. The poem of Troilus and Creseide was written in the former part of his life, and translated, as he says, from Lollius, an historiographer of Urbano in Italy. He did not however content himself with making a close translation of his author, but, on the contrary, added many things of his own, and borrowed also from others, more especially his friend Petrarch, whatever he judged might render it acceptable to his reader. That discourse of Predestination which he has inserted in the fourth book is entirely his own; and from it, and from what he has delivered upon the same subject in The Nun's Priest's Tale, the very learned Sir Henry Savile thought that he was no stranger to Archbishop Bradwardine's learned book *de Causa Dei*, published at that time. Sir Francis Knafton, who translated this poem into Latin rhymes, in his manuscript notes upon it, says, that it was not improbably conjectured that Chaucer, in writing The Lives and Loves of Troilus and Creseide, glanced at some private persons in the court of King Edward III. and did not follow Homer, Dares,

inclined the same way, and turned the edge of his satire against lazy monks, ignorant priests, and the insolence of such as belonged to ecclesiastical courts, with extraordinary success. Yet it does not at all appear that he was an enemy to religion, or even to that of the church of Rome, but rather the contrary; for he speaks very submissively of her doctrines, and bestows high characters upon such of the clergy as acted suitably to their calling: so that it was the ill men, who brought religion into contempt, and prostituted their own function in the vilest manner, that felt the severity of Chaucer's Muse, and not priests in general, or the Christian faith; for the former he highly revered, and the latter he firmly believed, as his writings plainly shew*. But how much soever

Dictys, or any historian of those times. However, says he, Chaucer has taken the liberty of his own inventions; he hath made an admirable and inimitable epick poem, describing in Troilus a complete knight in arms and courtship, and a faithful and constant lover, and in Creseide a most beautiful and coy lady, which being once overcome yields to the frailty of her sex. We shall have occasion hereafter to speak more largely of this worthy person's performance, and of the pains he took to illustrate Chaucer, in which he equalled at least, if not exceeded, all who have spent their time in doing justice to this great poet.

* *As his writings plainly shew.*] The true design of our Author was not to expose or abuse the clergy from a dislike to their

ver Wickliffe's doctrines might prevail, or Chaucer's writings please, among the better sort of people and in

their order, but, quite the contrary, to amend and to reform them; and it was with this view that he wrote many pieces, and translated others, that they might plainly perceive how much religion suffered by the monstrous irregularities in their behaviour. As for instance, *The Romant of the Rose* is a translation from the French. This poem was begun by William de Lorris, and continued by John Meung, commonly called Cloppinel, both famous French poets in their time. It seems to have been translated by Chaucer while he was at court, and about the time of the rise of Wickliffe's opinions, it consisting of violent invectives against the religious orders. It is left imperfect at the end, and there are some lacunas in other places of it. It may not be amiss to observe here, that the original author of this work, William de Lorris, died in the year 1260, at the age of twenty-six, and advanced no great way therein; but forty years afterwards it was finished and published by John de Meung, when he was in his twenty-fourth year. He was a man of sense and learning, well versed in divinity, philosophy, chymistry, astronomy, and other sciences, but was a violent enemy to bad priests and bad women: he is supposed to have died about the year 1365. This work is still much esteemed in France, where it has run through many editions; but the best, which was published in Holland, is of a very fresh date. Besides this, Chaucer is affirmed by Leland and other ancient writers to have been the author of *The Plowman's Tale*, which bears very hard upon the vices of the clergy both secular and regular; and the satire under the title of *Jack Upland* is also attributed to him upon very good authority; notwithstanding which there want not many who, under colour of veneration for Chaucer's memory, are desirous of imputing these pieces to others:

in the country, they were far enough from making a general impression on the minds of people in London,

others : and yet this would be of little use ; for in many other works that are undoubtedly his we find sentiments of the same nature. On the other hand, the venerable John Fox thinks the labour of our Author in this respect worthy the highest commendation, and even attributes the preservation of his Works to a particular providence. Let us hear him. " I marvel to consider this," says he, " how that the Bishops condemning and abolishing all manner of English books and treatises which might bring the people to any light of knowledge, did yet authorize the Works of Chaucer to remain still, and to be occupied, who no doubt saw in religion as much almost as ever we do now, and uttereth in his Works no less, and seemeth to be a right Wicklavian, or else there was never any ; and that all his Works almost, if they be thoroughly advised, will testify (albeit it be done in mirth and covertly), and especially the latter end of his third book of The Testament of Love ; for there purely he toucheth the highest matter, that is, the communion, wherein, except a man be altogether blind, he may espy him at the full ; although in the same book (as in all other he useth to do) under shadows covertly, as under a vizor, he suborneth truth in such sort as both privily she may profit the godly-minded, and yet not be espied of the crafty adversary ; and therefore the Bishops, belike taking his words but for jests and toys, in condemning other books, yet permitted his books to be read. So it pleased God then to blind the eyes of them for the more commodity of his people, to the intent that through the reading of his Treatises some fruit might redound thereof to his church, as no doubt it did to many. As also I am partly informed of certain which knew the par-

ties,

London, where the meaner sort of citizens were so warmly attached to the church, that upon the Duke of Lancaster's attending Wickliffe when he was summoned before the Bishop of London, and treating that prelate a little roughly, they made a kind of insurrection, and marching down into the Strand in a body, entered into and rifled the Savoy, which was the Duke of Lancaster's palace, built by himself, and at that time esteemed one of the finest houses in Europe, destroyed his goods, abused his servants, and turned his arms upside down, as if he had been a traitor: but by the care of the King, and the interposition of some of the principal nobility, this quarrel was compromised, and the Duke and the citizens reconciled, at least in appearance.

In the last year of King Edward, the French having infringed the truce which that monarch had concluded with them, commissioners were sent over to expostulate that matter before the Pope's legates, and of these Chaucer was one. This negotiation of

"ties, which to them reported that by reading Chaucer's Works
 "they were brought to the true knowledge of religion: and not
 "unlike to be true; for to omit the other parts of his Volume,
 "whereof some are more fabulous than other, what tale can be
 "more plainly told than The Tale of the Ploughman?" &c.

theirs

theirs was not very successful, only it produced some mention of a marriage between Richard Prince of Wales and the Lady Mary, daughter to the French king, and thereby made way for a new treaty, in which Sir Guiscard Dangle, Knight of the Garter, Sir Richard Sturrey, a great Wicklivist, and in high favour with the King, together with Geoffrey Chaucer, Esq. were commissioners; and this seems to have been the last publick employment that our Author bore; though from a gold chain about his neck, in that original picture of his still remaining as is before mentioned, it has been not without some shew of reason conjectured that he was honoured with some other dignity than from any records we have been able to trace; for it can hardly be supposed that he wore this ornament on account of his office in the Customs.

June 21st, 1377, the young Prince of Wales succeeded his grandfather by the title of Richard II. and his uncle the Duke of Lancaster, considering the incapacity of the King, who was then but eleven years of age, was entrusted with the chief share of the administration; and therefore, to ingratiate himself with the populace, he resolved to solemnize the new monarch's coronation with greater pomp and magnificence

sence than had been ever seen in this kingdom, previous to which a court of claims was established to settle the demands of those who should pretend to have a right to assist upon this occasion, and among these we find Geoffrey Chaucer*.

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* *And among these we find Geoffrey Chaucer.*] The claim made upon this occasion was in right of his ward, who was possessed of the manor of Bilsington in Kent, which was held of the crown by the service of presenting to the King three maple cups on the day of his coronation. This manor had been purchased by Sir Edmond Staplegate, the father of Richard Fitz-Allen Earl of Arundel, whose family had been in long possession of it; and it was set forth in Chaucer's petition, that the manor was held by Grand Serjeantry, by the owner's discharging the office of Chief Butler at the King's coronation. But Richard Earl of Arundel controverted this claim, and by his petition and plea set forth, that the office of Chief Butler belonged to his family, and was never annexed to this manor, his ancestors having enjoyed it both before they held that manor and since they parted with it, and therefore he demanded it as his proper right. The issue of this business was, that the Earl so far carried his point before John Duke of Lancaster, then acting as Lord High-Steward, as to be allowed to officiate for that time with a *salvo jure* that it should not infringe the right of Edmond Staplegate, or any who should pretend title for the future. This ward of our Author died about thirteen years after, but the manor continued in the family till the beginning of the reign of Henry VI. when it passed into that of the Cheyneys, who in the beginning of Queen Elizabeth's reign sold it to Sir Francis Barham of London, and his grandson Mr. Robert Barham was in possession of it at the coronation of King Charles II. when Mr. Erasmus Smith, on
the

It appears plainly that the Duke of Lancaster, who was now in the zenith of power, let slip no opportunity of serving so firm a friend and so useful a dependent as our Author was; for in the very beginning of this reign, it appears that by letters patent, dated March 23d, 1377, the King confirmed his grandfather's grant of twenty marks a year; and by other letters patent, dated the 18th of April following, he likewise confirmed the other grant of a pitcher of wine daily: but whether Chaucer remained in his office of Comptroller of the Customs is not so clear, though the contrary seems to be most probable; for in a short time after his affairs were in such confusion we find, that, in the second year of King Richard, he was obliged to have recourse to the King's protection, in order to screen him from his creditors: but how he came to fall into these difficulties, and whether they were temporary only, or of a long continuance, is a point that at this distance it is not possible to ascertain; but, from a comparison of circumstances, it seems to be most likely that it was from some sudden accident he fell under

the behalf of the said Mr. Barham, assisted at the coronation, and presented the three maple cups. This manor has since passed into other families.

this

this misfortune, and that he had recourse to the King's protection merely to gain time to settle his concerns. One may be the more confirmed in this by comparing his circumstances at this juncture with those of his family soon after. We have no direct historical lights indeed, but methinks though it be a new, it is still a probable conjecture, that about this time he conveyed all his estates to his eldest son Thomas Chaucer; and the facts that seem to strengthen this conjecture shall be submitted to the reader's judgment at the bottom of the page*.

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* *At the bottom of the page.*] All who have hitherto attempted to give any account of Chaucer's life have been very much at a loss about this circumstance of his having recourse to the King's protection, which shews that in the very beginning of this reign his affairs were in great disorder; and yet it is very plain that himself and his patron flourished in the full possession of power and plenty as long as King Edward III. lived. A certain writer hints that Chaucer exhausted his fortune in his foreign embassies; but a later writer observes, with greater probability, that he made his fortune by them; yet, as he very justly remarks, this by no means solves the doubt how he should come to be so very poor in so short a time, after his possessing so great wealth, for which amongst others we have his own authority. Now this riddle, I think, may be very probably explained thus. Our Author, Chaucer, about this time found out a very considerable match for his eldest son Thomas Chaucer, and this was Maud, the second daughter of Sir John Burghershe, a man of very considerable rank, but by no means brother to Sir Bartholomew Burghershe,

In the fourth year of King Richard the II^d's reign he procured a confirmation of the grants that had been formerly made to himself and to Philippa his wife, which is a proof that he had a great personal interest

Burghershe, Knight of the Garter, and of Dr. Henry Burghershe, Bishop of Lincoln, Chancellor and Treasurer of England, as a certain writer very confidently asserts; but rather, if I guess right, the nephew of those great men, and the son of Sir John Burghershe, who was truly their brother: and this I am led to believe, because it appears upon record that the custody of this John Burghershe, the father of Maud, was granted in his nonage to the daughter of Sir Bartholomew Burghershe before mentioned. A great fortune she was without doubt, but not the only daughter or sole heiress of her family, as has been represented, or at least not so at the time she married Thomas Chaucer, though she might be, and indeed was so afterwards. Neither are we to believe what we are told of her being a ward to the crown, for her father was then living, and lived many years after, that is to the 19th of Richard II. when he left behind him two daughters, Margaret the eldest, first married to Sir John Grenville, Knight, and then to John Arundel, Esq. and this Maud. Now my supposition is, that Geoffrey Chaucer, for obtaining this great match, settled all his land estate upon his son, and that his doing this might bring upon him those demands which put him under the necessity of obtaining the King's protection. As to the several facts upon which this conjecture is built, I think they are supported by as good authorities as can be desired; nor can any great difficulty arise from the age of this young gentleman, as may appear thus: Chaucer married his wife Philippa Rouet about the year 1360; and if he had this son the next year, he might be of full age in the latter end of the

interest in this court, since at the time of his obtaining this grant the power and influence of the Duke of Lancaster was very much sunk, as from a train of sinister accidents waiting upon his conduct he was become equally suspected by the King and disliked by the people. The great encouragement and support he had afforded to Mr. Wickliffe was attended with consequences that he did not in the least expect, and yet found it not in his power to hinder; for without doubt the Duke's great view in supporting this party was to weaken the power of the clergy, and to hinder them from taking so large a share as they did in the management of all temporal affairs: but some great men of his party, mistaking his view, pushed things to extremities, and, by countenancing itinerant preachers without either learning or sound principles, made way for a sudden turn, which had very near subverted the constitution, and thrown all things into confusion; for the common people, thus encouraged to shake off the yoke of the clergy, began to think that of the government also too heavy, and, taking occa-

the fourth year of Richard II. when this marriage took place, and before which in all probability the father might make this settlement. We shall have occasion hereafter to say more of this gentleman, who became a much greater man than his father, to whom he was a support in his declining years.

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sion from some taxes lately imposed, rose up in arms under the conduct of Wat Tyler, Jack Straw, and such kind of leaders, with a wild intention of freeing themselves from whatever these wise leaders taught them to look upon as oppressions. Their resentment was chiefly directed against the clergy, as appears by their beheading the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Prior of St. John's by Smithfield, who was Lord Treasurer, and by their burning that stately priory, and plundering the abbies of St. Alban's, Bury, and several others.

As soon as this rebellion was somewhat abated, the parliament began to enquire into the cause of it; nor were there wanting enemies of Wickliffe, who charged him and his followers with being the encouragers of it: but that is unlikely to be true; for had the rebels been Wickliffe's friends, they would never have burnt the Savoy, the palace of his patron the Duke of Lancaster. However, some of his followers gave too much cause for such a surmise, as Dr. Hereford, who asserted that Archbishop Sudbury deserved that death he found; and the King the year following empowered the Bishops to arrest Wickliffe, and forbad his subjects to encourage any of that persuasion; yet Wickliffe appeared, and seemed partly to satisfy the Bishops with his opinion.

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It is commonly said by most of our historians, that from this time forward the Duke of Lancaster disowned the Wicklivites; and charging the late disturbances upon them, styled their opinions the doctrine of devils. The writers also of our Author's life give into this opinion, and seem to think that he likewise began to temporize, and did not speak his sentiments so freely as formerly: but the truth is otherwise; for the Duke of Lancaster did not condemn Wickliffe's doctrine, but the doctrines of Dr. Hereford and other followers of Wickliffe, who had now deserted him, and propagated many dangerous tenets which he disclaimed. As for Chaucer, he was so far from abandoning his former notions, that he exerted himself to the utmost in 1382, in the support of John Comberton, generally styled John of Northampton, Mayor of London, in his endeavours to reform the city, according to the advice given by Wickliffe; which was so much resented by the clergy, that, rather than they would let this reformation proceed, they had recourse to the most violent methods, and, in order to prevent Comberton's being re-chosen Mayor of London, excited such disturbances as bordered upon a rebellion. The King making use of force upon this occasion, sent Sir Robert Knolles to

London, who committed great severities, put some to death, made the late Mayor Comberton prisoner, and used his utmost endeavours to apprehend Chaucer *: but our Author, having an early foresight of his

* *His utmost endeavours to apprehend Chaucer.*] It is very certain that in this whole matter our Author suffered for his attachment to his party: but this is so darkly represented by such as have written his life, that it is a very difficult thing to discover their meaning; and yet, after all, the fact is no more than this: there were at that time two powerful factions in the City; and as very seldom any thing of this kind happens but religion is drawn into the quarrel, so the one was supposed to be well affected to the church, and the other inclined to a reformation. Dr. Courtney, formerly Bishop of London, and now Archbishop of Canterbury, was protector of the one, and John Duke of Lancaster was esteemed to be the head of the other; and the leading man in his interest was this John Comberton, or John of Northampton, citizen and draper, on whose account all this disturbance happened, for which some lives were lost; and this unfortunate person being carried to Reading, was there tried and convicted, and had judgment given against him to be imprisoned for life, and to have his goods seized, which we find was accordingly done: and so strong the current ran at that time, that he with some other citizens of his party were excepted out of a pardon which the King granted; and all this was then understood to be done in spite and contempt of the Duke of Lancaster, to whom Comberton steadily adhered, and called him *his Lord* at his trial. But, for all this, things came about again not long after, and Mr. Comberton had the honour to have his sentence reversed, at the prayer of the Commons of England in parliament assembled. We may from all this infer, that how warm and indiscreet soever our Author,

his danger, made his escape into Hainault, and from thence went to France, where finding himself not so safe as he expected, he withdrew into Zealand, and there concealed himself for some time, with several other Londoners, who had fled upon the same account, and whom he generously subsisted out of his own private fortune. But while he was in this distress, most of those with whom he had been engaged at home, had found ways and means to make their peace, and, far from considering the calamities to which Chaucer had exposed himself for their sakes,

thor, Chaucer, might be in supporting that party to which he had attached himself, yet beyond all question there was nothing of disloyalty in this, but quite the contrary; for those who had then the management of the King's affairs, and run him into all these warm and violent measures, were the very same persons who by their evil counsels brought him at last into that distressed condition which cost him first his crown, and then his life. It is therefore no discredit to Chaucer, that he was a friend to Wickliffe, or that he espoused this party in the City, however some of our historians may have represented or rather misrepresented it; for it is a thing well enough known to all who are conversant in the English history, that many base and black calumnies are thrown upon the Duke of Lancaster and his party, merely on account of their opposing the pride and power of the prelates of those times, who, under colour of maintaining the King's prerogative, really sacrificed him to their own interests, which at the same time also they very ill understood, since a reasonable compliance had both saved him and done themselves much more good.

took no care to supply him, and, which was much worse, endeavoured to hinder the remittances that might have been made him out of his own fortune, and this in hopes that he might perish in his banishment, and by his death put them out of all fear. Such base and barbarous ingratitude, though it extremely afflicted him, yet it did not put our Author upon taking any measures to be revenged: on the contrary, he came over privately into England, to avoid starving in a strange country; but had not been long here before, either through the vigilance of the government's enquiries, or the treachery of some whom he trusted, he was discovered, seized, and sent to prison, where he was treated at first with great rigour and severity, but in the end promised the King's pardon and his liberty, if he would disclose all he knew, and put it in the power of the government to restore the peace of the City, which at length he did. It does not appear what the consequences were of his confession with respect to others; but with regard to himself, they brought upon him an inexpressible load of calumnies and flanders. All these circumstances we learn from himself, in that most excellent treatise of his, entitled *The Testament of Love*, which he wrote on purpose to vent his sorrow, and to console himself under

der the heavy burden of his afflictions. This load, which was already almost too heavy for him, received however some very considerable additions from the concurrence of other untoward accidents, such as the Duke of Lancaster's losing much of his credit at court, and Chaucer not a little of his interest with the Duke, who finding his reputation very much injured by the liberties taken with his character, on account of his amours with the Lady Swynford, he came, though very unwillingly, to a full resolution of parting with her, which he accordingly did; and this for a time affected the concerns of our Author extremely, who finding himself strongly pushed on one side by such as meant him ill, and little if at all supported on the other by such as had been formerly his friends, was so much depressed thereby in his mind, and distressed in his fortune, as to resolve upon disposing of his pensions before mentioned, which he had obtained in the former, and had been confirmed to him in the present reign; and this he actually did to one John Scalby, as appears by a license obtained for this purpose on record. In this unexpected and terrible reverse of fortune, he very wisely resolved to quit that busy scene of life in which he had met with so many troubles, and to seek in re-

tirement that happiness which from experience he knew was not to be met with in courts. The place he chose for his retreat was Woodstock, which had been the sweet scene of so much satisfaction to him in the days of his prosperity; and there he employed part of his time in revising and correcting his writings, totally secluded from the world, and tasting only those calm and solid pleasures which are the result of a wise man's reflections on the vicissitudes of human life. By this means he became well prepared for a new alteration in his condition, and as unexpected a change in his affairs as he had hitherto met with; for the absence of the great Duke of Lancaster, which had cost him so dear, gave him the better title to hope his favour and his protection upon his return, which happened towards the end of the year 1389. He had made an expedition into Spain, in order to recover the kingdoms of Castile and Leon, of which in right of his wife he had assumed the title; and, though his success in war was at first various, and at last disastrous, yet so wise and prudent a prince he was, that, after dismissing his army and seeming to relinquish that great design, for the accomplishment of which he had spent so much, he had, notwithstanding, so great address as to be able to extract even
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from his disappointment, almost as much as he could have expected from victory: for though he could not make himself a king, yet he made two of his daughters queens, one of Castile, and the other of Portugal; bringing home with him also a vast treasure in ready money, having at the time he landed in England, as one of our historians tells us, as many chests of gold as loaded forty-seven mules. Upon his return, in so good circumstances, his party began to revive, and the Duke recovered his credit at court, insomuch that the King in full parliament created him Duke of Aquitaine, and sent him over to take possession of that noble principality. His old affection for the Lady Catharine Swynford, sister to Chaucer's wife, revived with his fortune; and, under colour of rewarding the care she had taken in the education of his daughters, he made her very large grants in the nature of pensions*. We have no particular account

count

* *He made her very large grants in the nature of pensions.]*

The colour given by the Duke of Lancaster to these grants made in favour of the Lady Swynford, was the care she had taken of his two daughters, Philippa and Elizabeth, as appears by the words of the grant of the wardship of Bertram de Sanbys's heir, and of an annuity of two hundred marks *per annum*, payable out of his honour of Tickhill, which words are these: "For the
" good and agreeable service which our thrice dear and most be-

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" loved

count of the benefits that accrued to Chaucer from this turn in the Duke's affairs; but, notwithstanding this, we have no reason to doubt that he felt the effects of his patron's prosperity, who had suffered so deeply by the declension of his influence. But it seems his distaste to courts was grown so strong, that nothing could tempt him to quit his rural retirement, or to launch again into that sea of business where he

"loved Lady Catharine Swynford, the mistress of our most beloved daughters, hath rendered to our said children, we have given and granted, &c." But no doubt the true reason was for his special affection towards her on account of the children he had had by her, to whom he gave the name of Beaufort, in Latin *de bello forte*, from a castle so called in Anjou, which came into his family by the Lady Blanch of Artois, Queen of Navarre. These children were four, viz. John Beaufort, afterwards Earl of Somerset; Henry Beaufort, afterwards Cardinal Bishop of Winchester and Chancellor of England; Thomas Beaufort, Earl of Dorset, afterwards Duke of Exeter; and Joan, first married to Sir Robert Ferrers of Oversly, and afterwards to Ralph Earl of Westmoreland. We have mentioned this more particularly, because of the near relation between the descendants of our Author and those of this lady by the Duke of Lancaster, of which we find it remembered by a very curious and circumspect writer in the time of King Charles I. that there had been eight kings, four queens, and five princes, of England; six kings and three queens of Scotland; two cardinals, upwards of twenty dukes, almost as many duchesses of England, several dukes of Scotland, besides many potent princes and eminent nobility in foreign parts.

had

had been so lately shipwrecked. His mind however being more at rest, he undertook and finished a new work, which has established his reputation with respect to learning, upon as firm a basis as his former labours had fixed his fame for wit and genius. This new work plainly appears to be wrote in the year 1391, and was intended for the use of his younger son Lewis, then no more than ten years of age, and yet so forward in his learning, as to be desirous of having his father's instructions in acquiring the principles of astronomy. This gave birth to his Treatise on the Astrolabe, which not only shews the skill of its author, but likewise incontestably proves useful science was not at near so low an ebb in those times as it is generally represented. Neither will the case be at all altered, if what some writers have suggested should really prove true, and this Discourse of Chaucer's appear to be no more than a translation, or, which seems to be still a more probable opinion, a collection from other authors who had written before him upon the same subject.

About four years after this, while her husband was in France, Constance Duchefs of Lancaster died, and was buried with great solemnity at Leicester; and the Duke coming over into England at the close
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of the year, and not meeting with quite so kind a reception at court as he expected, went suddenly to Lincoln, where his old mistress, Lady Catharine Swynford, resided, and, to the great surprise of the world, now when she had not either youth or beauty to recommend her, married her. • This gave great discontent to the Duchefs of Gloucester, the Countefs of Derby, the Countefs of Arundel, and other ladies descended of the royal family, because she became by this marriage the second person in the realm, and from being no fit companion for any, was now suddenly to take place of them all: but she behaved with so much discretion and humility, that these disputes were quickly composed, and in a short time she gained such an ascendancy over the king, that he carried her, as well as the Duke her husband, with him, the year after their marriage, into France, at which time he espoused Isabel, the French King's daughter, then very young, and who was put under the care of the Duchefs of Lancaster.

After the ceremony of this marriage, and the return of the royal family to England, we find a very singular instance of the advantage that Chaucer received from this alliance; for now, by letters patent, the King granted him an annuity of twenty marks

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per annum, in lieu of that given him by his grandfather, and which in the time of his distress he had been compelled to dispose of for his subsistence. Soon after this he granted him his protection by other letters patent, dated the 4th of May, in the 21st year of his reign, for two years, signifying that for that space he had occasion to employ him in his service. Neither was this the last or greatest instance afforded him of royal favour; since we find that, by letters patent, dated the 13th of October in the following year, he had a pipe of wine annually granted out of the Customs of the port of London, which was to be delivered him by the Chief Butler, and to this office his son Thomas Chaucer was now raised.

But if these benefits cheered and comforted his decayed spirits in the decline of life, he had however the mortification to lose about the same time his noble patron, his constant friend, and kind brother, the Duke of Lancaster, by whom he was first brought to court, and through whose favour he never wanted either countenance or support, when it was in his power to bestow. This loss very probably afflicted him deeply, as we may gather from his retiring about this time to Dunnington-Castle, where he spent most of his days during the last two years of his life, indulging his

his grave thoughts in the solitude of that sweet retreat*. In

* *Of that sweet retreat.*] It is not very clear at what time our Author quitted his beloved house at Woodstock, in order to go to Dunnington-Castle, where he spent the last two years of his life; but as this was his final retreat, and became very remarkable for being so, an account of it cannot be unacceptable to the reader. It was in Mr. Camden's time, (when in its glory) "a
" small but neat castle, situate upon the brow of a rising hill,
" having an agreeable prospect, very light, with windows on all
" sides, said to be built by Sir Richard Adderbury, Knight,
" who likewise founded an hospital beneath it, called God's
" House: it was afterwards the seat of Chaucer, then of the
" De la Poles, and in our fathers' memory the dwelling of
" Charles Brandon Duke of Suffolk." At the beginning of the rebellion in the reign of King Charles I. it was a garrison for the King under the valiant Sir John Boys, which commanded the western road and town of Newbury, and was therefore of great advantage to the royal party as a safe retreat; and the cannon playing from it much annoyed the parliament forces. This place his Majesty honoured by lying one night in it; but after a rough assault and as bold a resistance, during which several of the towers were battered down, it was surrendered upon honourable conditions. This was the ancient state and the occasion of the late ruin of that pleasant structure. At present there is nothing to be seen of it, but what raises horror and concern, a battered gateway with two towers, and some small part of the shattered walls, being all that remains thereof. The ground about it and the ruins of it are choaked with brambles, and over-run with ivy; but lest the place of its situation should in a few years more be forgot, I shall as plainly as I can describe it. It lies half a mile to the right of Spinhamland (the ancient Spina of Antoninus), a mile beyond Newbury, on the same side. As you go from London,

In this situation he was when that great revolution happened, which placed Henry of Lancaster, the son of his brother-in-law, upon the throne, in which as Chaucer had no hand, (though certainly it could not displease him), so we do not find that he was at all eager in paying his compliments to the new King, much less that he triumphed in the misfortunes of his late kind master and gracious benefactor, as others, and particularly Gower, who had been more obliged to that unfortunate prince, and who at that time was both old and blind, most shamefully did. He did not however slight the advantages offered him by this revolution; but having accidentally lost the two last grants of an annuity, and of the pipe of wine by King Richard, he obtained a confirmation

don, you pass over the river Kennet to the village of Dunnington, from which there is a pretty steep but pleasant ascent through a lane to a hill under the Castle, where stands a seat formerly belonging to the Countess of Sandwich: from hence arises the Castle-hill very steep, and not unlike that whereon the Observatory stands at Greenwich, and from this hill there is a very fine prospect of several counties. On the back of the Castle are level grounds, woodlands, and enclosures. The Castle itself stands in a pleasant park, in which there was a famous oak, called Chaucer's Oak, under which, as tradition taught, he wrote several poems. Mr. Evelyn gives a particular account of this tree, and says there were three of them planted by Chaucer, the King's oak, the Queen's oak, and Chaucer's oak.

of

of them in the 1st year of Henry IV. by an exemplification of his former letters patent. Neither was this the only favour he received from the new king, who, out of regard to the ancient friendship and near alliance between the prince his father and our Author, granted him, during the 1st year of his reign, an annuity of forty marks *per annum* for the term of his life. It is true indeed, that a very great writer, a sincere admirer of our Author, and most deservedly a poet-laureate himself, informs us that Chaucer enjoyed this honour under three kings, Edward III. Richard II. and Henry IV. : but this is a mistake ; for in truth there was no such office in those days, or, if we may trust to the authority of the learned Selden, before the reign of Edward IV. If we take this in a more extensive sense, for an eminent poet who celebrated these princes, it may be justly applied to Chaucer in regard to the two first ; but we find nothing in his Works relating to the last, nor indeed is his name so much as mentioned in any of our Author's writings.

The small time he lived after the accession of this king was chiefly employed in regulating his private affairs, which had suffered by the publick disorders ; for all the publick acts of the deposed King Richard in the

21st year of his reign being declared void, Chaucer was forced to quit his retirement to come up to Town, to solicit his causes; and beginning now to bend under the weight of years, this unlucky accession of business, which obliged him to alter his usual way of living, might very possibly hasten his end, the near approach of which he bore with Roman constancy, or rather with Christian patience; for there is still extant a kind of ode that he is said to have composed in his last agonies, which very plainly proves that his senses were perfectly sound, and the faculties of his mind not in the least impaired*. He died October 25th, 1400, in the full possession of that high reputation which his writings had deservedly acquired; and was buried in Westminster Abbey, in the great south-cross isle. Some writers have affirmed that he was first buried in the cloister, and lay there till some years after: but this is a mistake; for Caxton, in his edition of Chaucer (which was long before the time of his removal as they place it), says that he was buried in the Abbey-church of Westminster, before the chapel of St. Bennet. And it is very

* *And the faculties of his mind not in the least impaired.*] This sonnet or ode consists of no more than three stanzas: it is that entitled *Gode Counsaile of Chaucer*.

probable he lay beneath a large stone of grey marble in the pavement, where the monument of Mr. Dryden now stands, which is in the front of that chapel, upon the erecting of which this stone was taken up and sawed in pieces, to make good the pavement; at least this seems best to answer the description of the place given by Caxton. As to the alterations that have happened since, and the inscriptions now visible on his tomb, an account will be given in the notes*.

* *In the notes.*] We are told by Speght and other authors, that the following lines stood anciently upon Chaucer's tombstone:

Galfridus Chaucer, vates et fama poësis
Maternæ hac sacra sum tumulatus humo.

This anciently must refer only to the time of Caxton, who procured a long epitaph to be written in honour of our Author by Stephanus Surigonus, Poet-Laureate of Milan, which was hung upon a pillar over-against Chaucer's gravestone; towards the end of which epitaph these two lines occur. But about the year 1555, as a very exact author reports, or in 1556, as Wood will have it, Mr. Nicholas Brigham, a gentleman of Oxford, who exercised his Muse much in poetry, and took great delight in Chaucer's Works, and honoured his memory, at his own charge erected a handsome monument for him not far from the said chapel; for in the same place he could not then conveniently erect it, by reason of the cancelli, which the late Duke of Buckingham obtained leave to remove, to make room for Mr. Dryden's tomb. Upon that monument Mr. Brigham caused Chaucer's picture to be painted, from that which was in Occleve's book, together with the following inscription, which still remains:

M. S.

We may justly affirm of this great man, that, in whatever light he is considered, he seems always to merit

M. S.

Qui fuit Anglorum vates ter maximus olim,
Galfridus Chaucer, conditur hoc tumulo :
Annum si quæras Domini, si tempora vitæ,
Ecce notæ subsunt quæ tibi cuncta notant.

25 Octobris 1400.

Ærumnarum requies mors.

N. Brigham hos fecit Musarum nomine sumptus.

1556.

In English thus.

Of English bards who sang the sweetest strains
Old Geoffrey Chaucer now this tomb contains :
For his death's date if, reader, thou should'st call,
Look but beneath, and it will tell thee all.

25th October, 1400.

Of cruel cares the certain cure is death.

N. Brigham placed these, in the name of the Muses, at his own expense, 1556.

About the ledge of the tomb we are told the following verses were written, that are now worn out : but it is more probable that they were inscribed upon a ledge of brass that is taken away ; for there is not the least sign of any letters upon the stone itself :

Si rogites quis eram, forsan te Fama docebit ;
Quod si fama negat, mundi quia gloria transit,
Hæc monumenta lege.

If who I was you ask, Fame shall declare ;
If Fame denies, since frail all glories are,
These stones shall speak, inscrib'd with pious care.

merit our esteem, as well as to claim our admiration. In his publick character, if we consider the time in which he lived, we must acknowledge that he shewed as great steadiness, and adhered as firmly to his principles, as could be expected; and as to his gratitude towards and affection for his patron, the great Duke of Lancaster, it stands in no need of apology. His conduct in the last part of his life was full of prudence and that calm contempt for an ungrateful world, which though it is easy for a man of parts to conceive, yet to persist in it is a very difficult task. In private life he was a fine gentleman, a learned writer, and an agreeable companion. In his youth he was gay, and loved pleasure; for which he might not only plead the usual excuses of his age and confi-

It may not be amiss to observe, that this date of his death is preserved by several writers, who also inform us, that he was then seventy-two. Some indeed have questioned it, because of a piece, entitled Cupid's Letter, printed with Chaucer's Works, and dated in 1402; but that was written by Thomas Occleve, his scholar, and was intended to do honour to his Works and memory. The Rev. Mr. Collier fixes his death in 1440, which was the 19th of Henry VI. and if so, Chaucer was but ten years old at the death of King Edward III. which contradicts all the records, and is in every respect a most glaring absurdity; whereas the other date agrees with them exactly, and therefore there can be no doubt of its truth.

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tution, but the custom also of the times, since he lived in the most gallant reign from the Conquest. But in his maturer state of life his manners altered, and his behaviour was modest and grave to a degree of excess, for which he was rallied by his patroness, the Countess of Pembroke, who told him his absence created more mirth than his conversation ; for he was very bashful and reserved in company, notwithstanding that life and spirit which appears in his writings. If we look upon him as an author, he may be truly styled the Father of English Poetry, and perhaps the Prince of it ; for, except the unavoidable defects of language, his Works have still all the beauties that can be wished for or expected in every kind of composition. He was not unacquainted with the ancient rules of poetry, nor was he incapable of writing up to them, as very clearly appears by The Knight's Tale, which, as Mr. Dryden very justly says, is a finished epick poem : but he did not always judge this exactness necessary, and perhaps he thought his genius set him above those restraints that ought to limit, because they improve, the works of meaner poets. He was deeply versed in moral and in natural philosophy ; and as perhaps no man understood human nature better, so it may be truly said,

that no writer in any language has either painted it with greater force, exactness, or judgment. His reading was deep and extensive, and his learning both specious and solid; for he knew how to expose those parts of it to view, that are most apt to attract public applause, and yet leave a sense concealed, that might at once employ and satisfy the most inquisitive understandings. It would draw this article into too great a length, should we persist in exhibiting every part of his accomplished character; and therefore we will in the notes give the best account we may of his merit in general as a poet, in all the different kinds of writing by which he distinguished himself in that capacity*: and next we will give the reader the

* *By which he distinguished himself in that capacity.*] We may safely affirm that of Chaucer, which can be hardly said of any other general poet, ancient or modern, that he excelled in all the different kinds of verse in which he wrote. In his sonnets or love-songs, when he was but a very boy, there is not only fire and judgment, but great elegance of thought, and neatness of composition. It is very true, that he did not always stand upon his own ground, but chose rather to translate from the Italian or French; yet he chose his authors judiciously, and used them freely; so that this, instead of sinking, serves really to heighten his character. That in the elegiac poetry he was a complete master, appears plainly by his Complaint of the Black Knight, the poem called *La belle Dame sans Mercy*, and several of his songs:

the clearest account we may of his largest work, peculiar in its kind ; and as it was almost without example,
so

songs. He was an excellent master of love poetry, having studied that passion in all its turns and appearances ; and Mr. Dryden prefers him upon that account to Ovid. His *Troilus and Creseide* is one of the most beautiful poems of that kind, in which love is curiously and naturally described in its early appearance, its hopes and fears, its application, fruition, and despair in disappointment. How great a master he was in satire, we shall have occasion to shew in the next note ; but his great proficiency in this did not at all hinder his discharging himself most happily in a far more difficult way of writing, that of panegyrick. The praises of Chaucer are easy, natural, and delicate, such as must give equal pleasure to the person commended and to the peruser, and have always the true air of a courtier, without the meanness of a flatterer. His moral poems are grave and weighty, full of good sense and of fine sentiments. In a word, he deserves all that is said of him by Mr. Dryden, who was scarce a better poet than a critick ; let us hear him then a little upon this subject. “ As he is the father of English poetry, so I hold him in “ the same degree of veneration as the Grecians held Homer, or “ the Romans Virgil : he is a perpetual fountain of good sense, “ learned in all sciences, and therefore speaks properly on all “ subjects : as he knew what to say, so he knows also when to “ leave off ; a continence which is practised by few writers, and “ scarcely by any of the Ancients, excepting Virgil and Horace. “ Chaucer followed Nature every where, but was never so bold “ as to go beyond her : and there is as great difference of being “ *poëta et nimis poëta*, if we may believe Catullus, as much as “ betwixt a modest behaviour and affectation. The verse of “ Chaucer I confess is not harmonious to us ; but it is like “ the eloquence of one whom Tacitus commends, it was *auri-*

so hitherto above the reach of imitation—I mean his Canterbury Tales *.

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“*bus istius temporis accommodata.* They who lived with him, and some time after him, thought it musical, and it continues so even in our judgment, if compared with the numbers of Lydgate and Gower, his contemporaries. There is the rude sweetness of a Scotch tune in it, which is natural and pleasing, though not perfect. It is true, I cannot go so far as he who published the last edition of him; for he would make us believe the fault is in our ears, and that there are really ten syllables in a verse where we find but nine: but this opinion is not worth confuting; it is so gross and obvious an error, that common sense (which is a rule in every thing but matters of faith and revelation) must convince the reader that equality of numbers in every verse which we call heroick was either not known or not always practised in Chaucer’s age: it were an easy matter to produce some thousands of his verses which are lame for want of half a foot, and sometimes a whole one, and which no pronunciation can make otherwise. We can only say that he lived in the infancy of our poetry, and that nothing is brought to perfection at the first. We must be children before we grow men. There was an Ennius, and in process of time a Lucilius and a Lucretius, before Virgil and Horace; even after Chaucer there was a Spenser, a Harrington, a Fairfax, before Waller and Denham were in being; and our numbers were in their nonage till these last appeared.”

* *I mean his Canterbury Tales.*] The scheme of this work is in every respect very extraordinary, and of so vast an extent, that at first sight one would be apt to pronounce it absolutely impracticable, from a persuasion that it must surpass the powers of any single mind to paint the different lineaments, and call out to view the various faculties, of every mind. The truth as well as the

We have already, in the course of his memoirs, spoken of most of his patrons, who were the greatest

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the meaning of this sentiment will best appear from a short representation of the Author's design, which is this: Chaucer pretends, that intending to pay his devotions to the shrine of Thomas à Becket, he set up his horse at the Tabard-inn in Southwark, that he found in the inn a number of pilgrims, who severally proposed the same journey, and that they all agreed to sup together, and to set out the next morning on the same party. The supper being finished, the landlord, a fellow of sense and drollery, conformable to his character and calling, makes them no disagreeable proposal, that, to divert them on their journey, each of them should be obliged to tell two stories, one going, the other coming back; and that whoever in the judgment of the company should succeed best in this art of tale-telling, by way of recompence, at their return to his inn, should be entitled to a good supper at the common cost; which proposal assented to, he promises to be their governor and guide. At the entrance of the poem, the characters of all the pilgrims are distinctly drawn, and a plan of the comedy, in which they stand for the *Dramatis Personæ*. Besides this, every Tale has its Prologue, and a kind of Epilogue too, which serves by way of transition to the next; and to the honour of our Author be it spoken, so far as his plan is executed, every part of it is performed with equal justice and spirit; and above all the character of the Host, who acts as a kind of Chorus in the ancient drama, is most admirably kept up, and the same wit, spirit, and humour, is preserved through the whole journey, that strikes and astonishes the reader so much at the very beginning, where the original character of this incomparable person is drawn at full length. A stronger argument in support of this character of The Canterbury Tales cannot well be brought than arises from the authority

as well as ablest men of those times. The circle of his friends was also very large; and his communicative

riety of three great poets, who have judged them worthy of imitation and revival; I mean Spenser, Dryden, and Pope; to whom we may add Mr. Betterton, who translated many of the characters of Chaucer, and must have been allowed to have been as fit a judge of them as any of the foregoing. But the reader will receive the fullest satisfaction on this head, from the critical remarks of Mr. Dryden, who as he perfectly understood, so he has very freely given us his sentiments on this masterpiece of our Author's. "He must," says he, "have been a man of a most wonderful comprehensive nature, because, as it has been truly observed of him, he has taken into the compass of his Canterbury Tales, the various manners and humours, as we now call them, of the whole English nation in his age: not a single character has escaped him. All his pilgrims are severally distinguished from each other, and not only in their inclinations, but in their very physiognomies and persons. Baptista Porta could not have described their natures better than by the marks which the poet gives them. The matter and manner of their Tales, and of their telling, are so suited to their different educations, humours, and callings, that each of them would be improper in any other mouth. Even the grave and serious characters are distinguished by their several sorts of gravity; their discourses are such as belong to their age, their calling, and their breeding; such as are becoming of them, and of them only. Some of his persons are vicious, and some virtuous; some are unlearned, or, as Chaucer calls them, lewd, and some are learned. Even the ribaldry of the low characters is different; the Reeve, the Miller, and the Cook, are several men, and distinguished from each other as much as the mincing Lady Priores and the broad-speaking gap-toothed Wife

" of

tive disposition made him as much beloved by his contemporaries, as he was admired both by them and by posterity. He appears to have been useful to them in every manner that was in his power ; and it was this disposition, in all probability, that kept them so firm to his interest while he was living, and taught them to have so high a respect for his memory after

“ of Bath. But enough of this ; there is such a variety of game
“ springing up before me, that I am distracted in my choice, and
“ know not which to follow. It is sufficient to say, according
“ to the proverb, that here is God’s plenty. We have our fore-
“ fathers and great-grandams all before us as they were in Chau-
“ cer’s days ; their general characters are still remaining in man-
“ kind, and even in England, though they are called by other
“ names than those of Monks and Friars, of Chanons, and
“ Lady-Abbeßes, and Nuns ; for mankind is ever the same, and
“ nothing lost out of nature, though every thing is altered.
“ Boccace lived in the same age with Chaucer, had the same ge-
“ nius, and followed the same studies ; both writ novels, and
“ each of them cultivated his mother tongue. In the serious
“ part of poetry, the advantage is wholly on Chaucer’s side ; for
“ though the Englishman has borrowed many tales from the Ita-
“ lian, yet it appears, that those of Boccace were not generally of
“ his own making, but taken from authors of former ages, and
“ by him only modelled, so that what was of invention in
“ either of them may be judged equal. But Chaucer has re-
“ fined on Boccace, and has mended the stories which he has
“ borrowed in his way of telling, though prose allows more li-
“ berty of thought, and the expression is more easy when uncon-
“ fined by numbers. Our countryman carries weight, and yet
“ wins the race at disadvantage.”

his

his decease. It is no difficult thing to compile a list of them from his writings, in which he has mentioned them with all the marks of kindness and esteem possible, a circumstance favourable to himself and to them; for in this poets have the advantage even of princes: the latter, how great soever, can confer only temporary benefits; but the former can bestow immortality; and therefore princes themselves have courted, not perhaps without political reasons, the good will of these favourites of the Muses: but we are apt to suspect their praises when applied to their patrons of high rank, more than their commendations of private friends; the former is commonly dictated by the head, whereas the latter flows from the heart; and this consideration alone makes it reasonable that we should insist more particularly on those whom our Author has thus consigned to fame: but, in order to spare the reader's time, we shall mention only a very few of Chaucer's intimate friends and contemporaries at the bottom of the page*.

That

* *At the bottom of the page.*] Amongst the earliest of Chaucer's friends, and also directors of his studies, were Nicholas of Lynne and John Some, both Carmelite monks, and extremely well versed in mathematical sciences, the former more especially, who left behind him several learned books, and is commended by
Leland,

That general applause with which his writings were received in his lifetime, and the high honours that

Leland, as having excelled in astronomy all that went before him. We have before mentioned Ralph Strode, who was both a celebrated poet and philosopher, of Merton-College in Oxford, where it seems our Author was intimately acquainted with him, and had a great veneration for his abilities. It is a strange error, which the author of the Life of Chaucer prefixed to Mr. Urry's edition has fallen into with regard to Strode, who, he says, was a great follower of Wickliffe; which is so far from being true, that he was one of the warmest writers against him, for which he is heavily censured by Bale, and as highly commended by Pitts. It is very probable, that Wickliffe and Chaucer were very good friends, as they both owed the eminence of their respective stations to the same patron, John Duke of Lancaster. Sir John Gower, an eminent lawyer, poet, and philosopher, was also Chaucer's intimate companion, as appears from both their writings. The former was blind before the latter died, and survived him only two years. But Thomas Occleve, or Hockliffe, a very ingenious man, and a celebrated writer, was a great favourite of our Author's, and imitated him in his manner of writing. We are indebted to him for preserving Chaucer's picture, which he caused to be drawn, in his book *De Regimine Principis*, and which he dedicated to King Henry V.; and it is very evident, from the verses which refer to that picture, that Chaucer had been a long time dead before he composed that work. Another scholar of his was the famous John Lydgate, a monk of Bury, who celebrates our Author's memory and writings in many of his pieces, and who outlived him forty years. Scho-gan also, who distinguished himself by his sarcastical wit, was a professed admirer and imitator of Chaucer; but, as Leland observes, if Chaucer, who sometimes styles Gower his master, excelled

that were paid him by such as took a pride in styling themselves his disciples after his death, stamped such a mark of authority upon his Works, as saved at least the greatest part of them from that oblivion which has covered the performances even of the most celebrated authors of his time. In spite of that spirit of envy which his free and severe satires excited in the clergy, in spite of his own Retraction (whether genuine or fictitious is uncertain), in spite of that authority which the church afterwards acquired, not of censuring only, but of condemning and prohibiting what books they pleased, his writings have escaped, and not barely escaped, but have been held in the greatest honour, and transmitted to posterity with such care and circumspection, and by the united labours of so many eminent persons, as will do lasting honour to his memory, and plainly prove that true genius, extensive learning, and a free spirit, are ca-

celled him in the spirit and elegance of his verses, Schogan, who acknowledged Chaucer for his master, was so far from doing the like, that he fell much below him. Yet such in all ages has been the proneness of mankind to encourage even the coarsest kind of satire, that Schogan wanted not his admirers, how little soever he resembled Chaucer. It is believed, that he was personally acquainted with the celebrated Petrarch; but that he was perfectly master of his writings, and those of Boccace, is incontestable.

pable

pable of commanding reverence through all ages, and preserving that transcendent esteem which is and ought to be the peculiar reward of superior merit*.

We

* *And ought to be the peculiar reward of superior merit.*] It must be allowed by all who are proper judges, that the excellence attributed to Chaucer's writings by such poets as came nearest his own times, did not arise in any degree either from custom or complaisance, but, on the contrary, was equally well founded in reason and on matter of fact; so that, if we examine the sentiments, we shall find them more noble, shall discover a greater compass in his learning, and above all an harmonious sweetness in his verse, far beyond any thing that is to be met with in any poetical compositions for a whole century after his time. This is very candidly acknowledged by a stranger, who had as good a right as any to dispute it---I mean that excellent old poet of Scotland, Gawin Douglas Bishop of Dunkeld. Indeed Chaucer's reputation was as well established in Scotland as in England; and I will take upon me to say that he was as much the Father of Poetry in that country as in this. It would render this note tedious to attempt giving a detail of the several printed editions of our Author's Works; it will be sufficient to refer the reader to the contents of this vol. where this may be found. Caxton, the Father of English Printers, first printed many of Chaucer's Works, and printed them several times. In the reign of Hen. VIII. William Botteville, *alias* Thynne, Esq. was the editor of a new edition of Chaucer, which in a very elegant discourse he addressed to King Hen. VIII. In the same reign the industrious and learned Leland was a studious reader and a most zealous admirer of the Works of Chaucer, in whose honour he wrote not one only, but three copies of commendatory verses. The same tribute of praise was bestowed upon our Author

We are not however to suppose that with all these great qualifications Chaucer could entirely escape the fury of false criticks; neither would it have been very

thor by that excellent writer and great judge of elegance in all kind of writing, Roger Ascham; to whom we may add Sir Philip Sidney, who very judiciously observes, that it was equally strange to him that Chaucer should see so clearly in so misty a time, and that in brighter ages men should go so stumblingly after him. About this time Mr. Speght, by the assistance of the industrious John Stowe, published a new edition of our Author's Works, which were dedicated to Sir Robert Cecil, afterwards Earl of Salisbury; and another still more complete edition was promised by Mr. Francis Thynne, which never appeared. We have mentioned the commendations given him by the laborious John Fox, and the most learned Camden: we must add to these the numerous testimonies of the immortal Spenser, and the judicious apology of the supposed levities in Chaucer's Works, by Mr. Francis Beaumont. The celebrated Sir Henry Savile mentions him with the highest respect; and the great Mr. Selden has given us a noble specimen of that profound learning of which he was master, in justifying an epithet of our Author's. Sir Francis Kynaston, of Otely in Shropshire, published the first and second books of a Latin version of Troilus and Creseide, and completed his translation of and notes upon the other three; and, from some specimens that are extant in the Glossary at the end of Mr. Urry's edition, the world may well perceive how valuable a performance we are deprived of by the loss or concealment of his manuscript. It would be needless to swell this note with other particulars; but if some able hand would resume the design of the late ingenious Mr. Ogle, and give us his Canterbury Tales in modern English, with a proper body of notes, there is no doubt that it would meet with a favourable reception.

much

much perhaps to his honour if he had, inasmuch as all great poets, ancient and modern, have been so generally infested by these cavillers, that they seem to be the necessary attendants of an exalted reputation, and, like the slaves in a Roman triumph, make unwillingly an addition to that glory they meant to shade. Those who have attacked Chaucer, have not presumed to question his wit, for of this perhaps no writer of our nation ever had more; neither have they disputed his poetical abilities, which certainly set his on a level with the greatest names in antiquity; nor have they dared to throw any aspersion on his learning, the extent of which is not greater than the masterly degree of propriety with which it is every where applied: but the point to which they object is his changing, debasing, or corrupting our language, by introducing foreign words, as if the worth of all languages did not arise from their being thus enlarged and compounded, or as if Chaucer could have hurt the jargon of his time, which was not either Saxon, Norman, or French, but a mixture of all, by introducing words derived from the sweetest and smoothest language then used throughout Europe, I mean the Provençal. It is however just to observe, that this reflection never made any great impression,

pression, and that, with the best and most elegant writers in our tongue, Chaucer passes not only for a great improver, but for the very Father and Founder of it; and it is not a little to his honour, that amongst those who are of this opinion we may reckon one of the soundest of our criticks, and one of the correctest writers in our language. So wide the difference is between the narrow notions of false wits, and the fair and candid judgments that are given by the true * !

* *And the fair and candid judgments that are given by the true.*] The first writer that ventured to fall upon our Author was himself more than half a foreigner, and very far from being correct with respect to sentiment or style. His very charge in the present case will prove what I have advanced: "The poet, "Geoffrey Chaucer," says he, "writing his poesies in English, is of some called the first illuminator of the English tongue. Of their opinion I am not, though I reverence "Chaucer as an excellent poet for his time. He was indeed a "great mingler of English with French, unto which language "(belike for that he was descended of French or rather Waloon "race) he carried a great affection." But Dr. Skinner, in a very elegant Latin style, has attacked our Author with much more spirit and force; I shall give his words in English: "The "poet Chaucer set the worst example, who by bringing whole "shoals of French words into our language, which was but too "much adulterated before, through the effects of the Norman "conquest, deprived it almost wholly of its native grace and "splendour, laying on paint over its pure complexion, and "for a beautiful face substituted a downright mask."

We

We cannot close this life better than by giving a succinct detail of our Author's family, or, to speak with greater propriety, of his eldest son ; for as to his second son Lewis, we have no account in what station he lived, or where he died : but as to Thomas Chaucer, the office of Chief Butler to the King, granted to him in the last year of Richard II. was afterwards given him for life, by letters patent from King Henry IV. and confirmed by Henry VI. In the 2d year of Henry IV. we find him Speaker of the House of Commons, Sheriff of Oxfordshire and of Berkshire, and Constable of Wallingford-Castle and of Knaresborough-Castle during life. In the 4th year of the same reign the King directed an order to him, as Chief Butler, to deliver one hundred tons of wine to the Duke of Burgundy. In the 6th year of the same prince he was sent Ambassador into France ; and the year following he went beyond the seas, joined in commission with the King's brother and Geoffrey Chaucer's nephew, Henry Beaufort Bishop of Winchester. In the 9th year of the same reign, on Tuesday the 25th of October, the Commons presented him their Speaker, as they did likewise in the 11th year, on Wednesday the 28th of January. In the 12th year of that reign Queen Jane granted

to him, for his good service, the manors of Woodstock, Hannebrough, Wotton, and Stantesfield, during life; and in the 13th year, on the 5th of November, he was again presented Speaker, as he was in the 2d of Henry V. on Wednesday the second day of parliament; and in the same year he was sent by the King, in joint commission with Hugh Mortimer, to treat of a marriage with Catharine daughter to the Duke of Burgundy. He was likewise Ambassador in the 5th and 6th years of the same reign, with Walter Hungerford, Steward of the Household, in the same affair; and again in the 6th year of the same reign he was Ambassador for peace with France; and he passed through several other publick stations, as appears by records. He resided chiefly at Ewelme in Oxfordshire, which came to him by marriage, and there he died on the 28th of April, 1434, and was buried in that parish church, under black a marble tomb. By his wife Maud, or Matilda, who survived him two years, he had one daughter named Alice, who was thrice married, first to Sir John Philips, Knight, and afterwards to Thomas Montacute Earl of Salisbury, who dying left her very rich. Her third husband was the famous William de la Pole, Earl and afterwards Duke of Suffolk, who was first secretly

secretly married to the Countess of Hainault, by whom he had one daughter, but procuring a divorce from her, he married this Alice, by whom he had one son, John Duke of Suffolk. Duke William lived chiefly at Dunnington and Ewelme, at the first of which Stowe says he built an hospital; but he seems to mistake it for that founded by Adderbury, as before mentioned; for Dugdale takes no notice of any other; but at Ewelme he founded one called God's House. He was an instance of the danger of a prince's favour, and the envy that attends it; for influencing the notions and the will of his master Henry VI. too much, and abusing the power he had over that easy prince, he enraged the Commons to that degree, that nothing less than his banishment could appease them; which being agreed to, the Yorkists, fearful of his return, seized him on his passage in Dover-road, and cut off his head upon the side of a cock-boat, and his body was buried at the Charter-House at Hull. The Duchess survived him several years, and, after an honourable life, died at Ewelme in the year 1475. Their son John had issue, according to Leland, John Earl of Lincoln, Edmund afterwards Duke of Suffolk, Richard, William, and a fifth son, who was a scholar in Gonvil-Hall in Cam-

bridge. Edmund de la Pole, the last of that name Duke of Suffolk, for being in treason against Henry VII. for which he had been once pardoned, forfeited his life to the crown, and was beheaded in the 7th year of that king's reign, whereby the estates which Chaucer's family was possessed of came to the crown, and particularly the hospital of Ewelme, which was by King James I. bestowed on the Physick Professor at Oxford, who is always master thereof in virtue of his office.

AN
INTRODUCTORY DISCOURSE
TO THE
CANTERBURY TALES.

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§ I. THE dramatick form which Boccace gave to his collection of tales or novels about the middle of the 14th century (1) must be allowed to have been a capital improvement of that species of amusing composition. The Decameron in that respect (not to mention many others) has the same advantage over the

(1) The action of The Decameron being supposed in 1348, the year of the great pestilence, it is probable that Boccace did not set about his work till after that period. How soon he completed it is uncertain. It should seem from the introduction to the fourth day, that a part (containing perhaps the three first days) was published separately; for in that introduction he takes pains to answer the censures which had been passed upon him by several persons who had read his novels. One of the censures is, "that it did not become *his age* to write for the amusement of women, &c." In his answer he seems to allow the fact, that he was rather an old fellow, but endeavours to justify himself by the examples of Guido Cavalcanti et Dante Alighieri *gia vecchi* et Messer Cino da Pistoia *vecchissimo*. It appears from a passage in the *Laberinto d'Amore* [ed. 1723, t. iii. page 24] that Boccace considered himself as an elderly man when he was a little turned of forty, and therefore the publication of the first part of The Decameron may very well have been, as Salviati has fixed it, [V. Manni, *Ist. del Decam.* p. 144] in 1353, when Boccace was just forty years of age. If we consider the nature of the work; and that the author in his conclusion calls it repeatedly *lunga fatica*, and says that *molto tempo* had passed between the commencement and the completion of it, we can hardly, I think, suppose that it was finished in less than ten years, which will bring the publication of the entire collection of novels (as we now have it) down to 1358.

Cento Nouvelle Antiche, which are supposed to have preceded it in point of time, that a regular comedy will necessarily have over an equal number of single unconnected scenes. Perhaps indeed there would be no great harm if the criticks would permit us to consider *The Decameron*, and other compositions of that kind, in the light of comedies not intended for the stage; at least we may venture to assume that the closer any such composition shall copy the most essential forms of comedy, the more natural and defined the plan shall be, the more the characters shall be diversified, the more the tale shall be suited to the characters, so much the more conspicuous will be the skill of the writer, and his work approach the nearer to perfection.

§ 2. *The Canterbury Tales* are a work of the same nature with *The Decameron*, and were in all probability composed in imitation of it, though upon a different and (in my opinion) an improved plan. It would be easy to shew that, in the several points above mentioned, Chaucer has either been more judicious or more fortunate than his master Boccace; but (waving for the present (2) that disquisition) I shall

(2) I will only just mention what appear to me to be fundamental defects in *The Decameron*. In the first place, the *action*

shall proceed to the immediate object of this Discourse, which is, in the first place, to lay before the reader the general plan of The Canterbury Tales, as it appears to have been originally designed by Chaucer, and, secondly, to give a particular review of the several parts of that Work which are come down to us as they are published in this edition.

§ 3. The general plan of The Canterbury Tales may be learned in a great measure from the Prologue which Chaucer himself has prefixed to them. He supposes there that a company of pilgrims going to

tion is indefinite, not limited by its own nature, but merely by the will of the author. It might, if he had been so pleased, have as well comprehended twenty or a hundred days as ten, and therefore, though some frivolous reasons are assigned for the return of the company to Florence, we see too plainly, that the true reason was, that the budget of novels was exhausted; not to mention that every day after the first may properly be considered as containing a new action, or, what is worse, a repetition of the action of the former day. The second defect is in the *characters*, which are so nearly resembling to each other in age, rank, and even natural disposition, that if they had been strictly supported, their conversation must have been incapable of that variety which is necessary to carry the reader through so long a work. The third defect has arisen from the author's attempt to remedy the second. In order to diversify and enliven his narrations, he has made a circle of virtuous ladies and polite gentlemen hear and relate in their turns a number of stories, which cannot with any degree of probability be supposed to have been suffered in such an assembly.

Canterbury

Canterbury assemble at an inn in Southwark, and agree, that, for their common amusement on the road, each of them shall tell at least one Tale in going to Canterbury, and another in coming back from thence, and that he who shall tell the best Tales, shall be treated by the rest with a supper upon their return to the same inn. This is shortly the fable. The characters of the pilgrims are as various as at that time could be found in the several departments of middle life; that is, in fact, as various as could with any probability be brought together so as to form one company, the highest and the lowest ranks of society being necessarily excluded. It appears further that the design of Chaucer was not barely to recite the Tales told by the pilgrims, but also to describe their journey. *And all the remenant of their pilgrimage*, [v. 726] including, probably, their adventures at Canterbury as well as upon the road. If we add that the Tales, besides being nicely adapted to the characters of their respective relators, were intended to be connected together by suitable introductions, and interspersed with diverting episodes, and that the greatest part of them was to have been executed in verse, we shall have a tolerable idea of the extent and difficulty of the whole undertaking; and
admiriug,

admiring, as we must, the vigour of that genius which in an advanced age (3) could begin so vast a work, we shall rather lament than be surprised that it has been left imperfect.

§ 4. In truth, if we compare those parts of *The Canterbury Tales* of which we are in possession with the sketch which has been just given of the intended whole, it will be found that more than one half is wanting. The Prologue we have perhaps nearly complete, and the greatest part of the journey to

(3) Chaucer was born in 1328, and it is most probable, I think, that he did not begin his *Canterbury Tales* before 1382, at the earliest. My reason is this. The queen, who is mentioned in *The Legende of Good Women*, v. 496, was certainly Anne of Bohemia, the first queen of Rich. II.; she was not married to Richard till the beginning of 1382, so that *The Legende* cannot possibly be supposed of an earlier date than that year. In *The Legende* [ver. 329---332, ver. 417---430] Chaucer has enumerated, I believe, all the considerable works which he had then composed. It was to his purpose not to omit any. He not only does not mention *The Canterbury Tales*, but he expressly names the story of Palamon and Arcite, and the *Life of Saint Cecilia*, both which now make part of them, as separate compositions. I am persuaded therefore, that in 1382 the work of *The Canterbury Tales* was not begun; and if we look further, and consider the troubles in which Chaucer was involved for the five or six following years by his connections with John of Northampton, we can hardly suppose that it was much advanced before 1389, the sixty-first year of the Author's age.

Canterbury,

Canterbury, but not a word of the transactions at Canterbury, or of the journey homeward, or of the Epilogue which we may suppose was to have concluded the work, with an account of the prize-supper, and the separation of the company. Even in that part which we have of the journey to Canterbury it will be necessary, in the following review, to take notice of certain defects and inconsistencies, which can only be accounted for upon the supposition that the work was never finished by the Author.

§ 5. Having thus stated the general plan of The Canterbury Tales, I shall now, according to my promise, enter upon a particular review of those parts of them which are published in this edition, beginning with *The Prologue*.

It seems to have been the intention of Chaucer, in the first lines of the Prologue, to mark with some exactness the *time* of his supposed pilgrimage; but, unluckily, the two circumstances of his description, which were most likely to answer that purpose, are each of them irreconcilable to the other. When he tells us that *the shoures of April had perced to the rote the droughte of March*, ver. 1, 2, we must suppose (in order to allow due time for such an operation) that April was far advanced, while on the other hand the
place

place of the sun, *having just run half his course in the Ram*, ver. 7, 8, restrains us to some day in the very latter end of March, as the vernal equinox in the age of Chaucer, according to his own treatise on the Astrolabe (4), was computed to happen on the 12th of March. This difficulty may (and I think should) be removed by reading in ver. 8, *the Bull*, instead of *the Ram* (5). All the parts of the description will then be consistent with themselves, and with another passage, [ver. 4425,] where, in the best mss. *the eighte and twenty day* of April is named as the day of the journey to Canterbury.

(4) In this particular the editions agree with the mss. but in general the printed text of this treatise is so monstrously incorrect, that it cannot be cited with any safety.

(5) This correction may seem to be authorized in some measure by Lydgate, who begins his Continuation of The Canterbury Tales in this manner:

Whan bright Phebus *passed was the Ram*
Midde of Aprill, and into the Bull came.

But the truth is that Dan John wrote for the most part in a great hurry, and consequently without much accuracy. In the account which he proceeds to give of Chaucer's Tales, he not only confounds the circumstances of description of the Sompnour and Pardoner, but he speaks of the latter as---

Telling a tale to anger with the Frere.

Storie of Thebes, ver. 32—35.

We

We will suppose therefore that the preceding day, the seven-and-twentieth of April, was the day on which the company assembled at the Tabard. In what year this happened, Chaucer has not thought fit to inform us (6): either he did not think it necessary to

(6) It is clear that, whether the pilgrimage were real or imaginary, Chaucer as a poet had a right to suppose it to have happened at the time which he thought best: he was only to take care, when the time was once fixed, that no circumstances were admitted into his poem which might clash or be inconsistent with the date of it. When no particular date is assigned to a fable of this sort, we must naturally imagine that the date of the fable coincides with that of the composition, and accordingly, if we examine *The Canterbury Tales*, we shall not find any circumstances which do not perfectly suit with that period which has been stated in a former note, as the probable time of Chaucer's beginning to compose them. The latest historical fact mentioned in them is the insurrection of Jakke Straw, [ver. 15400] which happened in 1381, and the earliest in which any person of the drama is concerned is the siege of Algezir, [ver. 56, 57] which began in August 1342, and ended with the taking of the city in March, 1344. [*Mariana*, l. xvi. c. 10, 11.] The Knight therefore may very well be supposed to have been at that siege, and also upon a pilgrimage to Canterbury in 1383, or thereabouts.---They who are disposed to believe the pilgrimage to have been real, and to have happened in 1383, may support their opinion by the following inscription, which is still to be read upon the inn, now called the Talbot in Southwark; "This is the inn where Sir Jeffrey Chaucer and the twenty-nine Pilgrims lodged in their journey to Canterbury, anno 1383." Though the present inscription is evidently of a very recent

to fix that point at all, or perhaps he postponed it till the completion of his work should enable him to assign

recent date, we might suppose it to have been propagated to us by a succession of faithful transcripts from the very time; but unluckily there is too good reason to be assured that the first inscription of this sort was not earlier than the last century. Mr. Speght, who appears to have been inquisitive concerning this inn in 1597, has left us this account of it in his *Glossary*, v. *Tabard*: "A jaquet or sleevelesse coate, worne in times past by noblemen in the warres, but now onely by heraults, and is called theyre coate of armes in servise. It is the signe of an inne in Southwarke by London, within the which was the lodging of the Abbot of Hyde by Winchester. This was the hostelry where Chaucer and the other pilgrims mett together, and, with Henry Baily their hoste, accorded about the manner of their journey to Canterbury. And whereas through time it hath bin much decayed, it is now by master J. Preston, with the Abbot's house thereto adjoynd, newly repaired, and with convenient roomes much encreased, for the receipt of many guests." If any inscription of this kind had then been there, he would hardly have omitted to mention it, and therefore I am persuaded it has been put up since his time, and most probably when the sign was changed from the Tabard to the Talbot, in order to preserve the ancient glory of the house notwithstanding its new title. Whoever furnished the date, must be allowed to have at least invented plausibly.---While I am upon the subject of this famous hostelry, I will just add, that it was probably parcel of two tenements which appear to have been conveyed by William de Ludegarfale to the Abbot, &c. *de Hydâ juxta Winton*, in 1306, and which are described (in a former conveyance there recited) to extend in length, "a communi fossiato de Suthwerke versus Orientem, usque Regiam viam de Suthwerke versus Occidentem."

assign such a date to his fable, as should be consistent with all the historical circumstances which he might take occasion to introduce into it.

§ 6. A second point intended to be defined in the Prologue, is the number of the company; and this too has its difficulties. They are said, in ver. 24, to have been *nine-and-twenty*; but it is not clear whether Chaucer himself is included in that number; they might therefore, according to that passage, be *thirty*: but if we reckon the several characters as they are enumerated in the Prologue, we shall find them *one-and-thirty*: 1. a Knight, 2. a Squier. 3. a Yeman, 4. a Prioresse, 5. an other Nonne, 6, 7, 8. three Preestes, 9. a Monk, 10. a Frere, 11. a Marchant, 12. a Clerk of Oxenforde, 13. a Sergeant of the Lawe, 14. a Frankelein, 15. an Haberdasher, 16. a Carpenter, 17. a Webbe, 18. a Deyer, 19. a Tapiser, 20. a Coke, 21. a Shipman, 22. a Doctor of Physike, 23. a Wif of Bathe, 24. a Persone, 25. a Plowman, 26. a Reve, 27. a Miller, 28. a Sompnour, 29. a Pardoner, 30. a Manciple, 31.

“Occidentem.” *Registrum de Hyde, Ms. Harl. 1761, fol. 166* ---173. If we should ever be so happy as to recover the account-books of the Abbey of Hyde, we may possibly learn what rent Harry Bailly paid for his inn, and many other important particulars.

Chaucer

Chaucer himself. It must be observed however, that in this list there is one very suspicious article, which is that of the *three Preestes*. As it appears evidently to have been the design of Chaucer to compose his company of individuals of different ranks, in order to produce a greater variety of distinct characters, we can hardly conceive that he would, in this single instance, introduce *three* of the same profession, without any discriminating circumstances whatever; and in fact, when the Nonne's Preeft is called upon to tell his Tale, [ver. 14814] he is accosted by the Host in a manner which will not permit us to suppose that two others of the same denomination were present. This must be allowed to be a strong objection to the genuineness of that article of the *three Preestes*; but it is not the only one. All the other characters are particularly described, and most of them very much at large; whereas the whole that is said of the *other Nonne* and the *three Preestes* is contained in these two lines [ver. 163, 4] at the end of the Priorelle's character:

Another Nonne also with hire had she,
That was hire Chapellein, and Preestes three.

Where it is also observable, that the single circumstance of description is false; for no nonne could be a

chaplain. The chief duty of a chaplain was to say mass and to hear confession, neither of which offices could regularly be performed by a nonne, or by any woman (7).

It should seem, therefore, that we have sufficient ground to reject these two lines, or at least the second, as an interpolation (8); by which means we shall

(7) It appears that some abbesses did at one time attempt to hear the confessions of their nuns, and to exercise some other smaller parts of the clerical function: but this practice, I apprehend, was soon stopped by Gregory IX. who has forbidden it in the strongest terms, *Decretal.* l. v. tit. 38, c. x. "Nova quædam nostris sunt auribus intimata, quod Abbatissæ moniales proprias benedicunt; *ipsarum quoque confessiones in criminibus audiunt*, et legentes Evangelium præsumunt publice prædicare: Cum igitur id absolum sit et pariter absurdum, Mandamus quatenus ne id de cætero fiat cunctis firmiter inhibere." If these presumptuous abbesses had ventured to say mass, his Holiness would doubtless have thundered still louder against them.

(8) My notion (I cannot call it opinion) of the matter is this; that the first of these lines did really begin the character of the Nonne, which Chaucer had originally inserted in this place, together with that of the Nonne's Preeft, at as great length as the other characters; but that they were both afterwards expunged either by himself, or (more probably) by those who published his work after his death, for reasons of nearly the same kind with those which occasioned the suppression of the latter part of *The Clerk's Tale*. I suspect our bard had been rather too gay in his description of these two religious persons. See a little concerning the Preeft, ver. 15453---65. If it should be thought improbable

shall get rid of *two* of the Preeftes, and the detail of the characters will agree with the grofs number in ver. 24, Chaucer himfelf being included among the *nine-and-twenty*. As novelifts generally delight in even numbers, it is not improbable that the Hoft was intended to be the thirtieth: though not under the fame obligation with the other pilgrims, he might nevertheless tell his Tale among them as a volunteer.

§ 7. This leads me, in the third place, to examine what the *agreement* was which the pilgrims entered into, at the fuggeltion of the Hoft, with refpect to the number of Tales that each perfon was to tell. The propofal of the Hoft ftands thus, with very little variation, in all the mff.

This is the point—[fays he, ver. 792—5]

That eche of you, to fhorten with youre way,
In this viage fhall tellen Tales tway,
To Canterbury ward, I mene it fo,
And homeward he fhall tellen other two.

improbable that an interpolator would infer any thing fo abfurd and contradictory to the Author's plan as the fecond line, I beg leave to fuggelt, that it is ftill more improbable that fuch a line fhould have come from the Author himfelf; and further, I think I can promife, in the courfe of the following Work, to point out feveral other undoubted interpolations, which are to the full as abfurd as the fubject of our prefent difcuffion.

From this passage we should certainly conclude, that each of them was to tell *two* Tales in the journey to Canterbury, and *two more* in the journey homeward: but all the other passages in which mention is made of this agreement, would rather lead us to believe that they were to tell only *one* Tale in each journey, and the Prologue to The Parson's Tale strongly confirms this latter supposition. The Host says there, [ver. 17317]

Now lacketh us no Tales mo than on--

and calling upon the Parson to tell this one Tale which was wanting, he says to him, [ver. 17335]

---ne breke thou not our play,
For every man, save thou, hath told his Tale.

The Parson therefore had not told any Tale before, and only one Tale was expected from him (and consequently from each of the others) upon that journey.

It is true that a very slight alteration of the passage first cited would reconcile that too to this hypothesis; if it were written—

That eche of you, to shorten with youre way,
In this viage shal tellen Tales tway,
To Canterbury ward, I mene it, o,
And homeward he shal tell another to-----

the

the original proposition of the Host would perfectly agree with what appears to have been the subsequent practice. However, I cannot venture to propose such an alteration of the text in opposition to so many mss. some of them of the best note; and therefore the reader, if he is so pleased, may consider this as one of those inconsistencies hinted at above, which prove too plainly that the Author had not finished his Work.

§ 8. The remainder of the Prologue is employed in describing the characters of the pilgrims, and their first setting out upon their journey. The little that it may be necessary to say in illustration of some of the characters I shall reserve for the Notes. The circumstances of their setting out are related succinctly and naturally; and the contrivance of appointing the Knight *by lot* to tell the first Tale, is a happy one, as it affords the Author the opportunity of giving his Work a splendid opening, and at the same time does not infringe that apparent equality upon which the freedom of discourse, and consequently the ease and good humour of every society, so entirely depends. The general satisfaction which this appointment is said to give to the company, puts us in mind of a similar gratification to the secret wishes of the Grecian army, when the lot of fighting with Hec-

tor falls to Ajax, though there is not the least probability that Chaucer had ever read the Iliad, even in a translation.

§ 9. *The Knight's Tale*, or at least a poem upon the same subject, was originally composed by Chaucer as a separate work: as such it is mentioned by him, among some of his other works, in *The Legend of Good Women*, [ver. 420, 1] under the title of—*Al the Love of Palamon and Arcite of Thebes, though the Storie is knowen lite*—and the last words seem to imply that it had not made itself very popular. It is not impossible that at first it was a mere translation of *The Theseida* of Boccace, and that its present form was given to it when Chaucer determined to assign it the first place among his *Canterbury Tales*. As *The Theseida*, upon which this Tale is entirely founded, is very rarely to be met with (9), it may be not unpleasing to the reader

to

(9) The letter, which Boccace sent to the Fiammetta with this poem, is dated *di Napoli a 15 d'Aprile 1341*. [*Lettere di xiii. Uomini Illust. Ven. 1564.*] I believe that date is a true one, and it is remarkable, as being the very year and month in which Petrarch received the laurel at Rome. The long friendship, which subsisted between these two extraordinary men, must probably have commenced in the preceding winter, when Petrarch came to Naples, in order to be examined by King Robert, previously

to see here a short summary of it, which will shew with what skill Chaucer has proceeded in reducing a poem

viously to his going to Rome. Boccace seems to have been present at some of the conversations between him and the king. [*Geneal. Deor.* l. xiv. c. xxii.]---The first edition of the *Theſeida*, according to Quadrio, [t. vi. p. 462] was without date, and under the mistaken title of *Amazonide*, which might have been proper enough for the first book: it was soon after however reprinted, with its true title, at Ferrara, in 1475, fol. Dr. Askew was so obliging as to lend me the only copy of this edition, which I have ever heard of in England. The Rev. Mr. Crofts has a later edition in 4to, printed at Venice in 1528; but in that the poem has been *riveduto e emendato*, that is, in plain English, modernized. I cannot help suspecting that Salvini, who has inveighed with great bitterness against the corruptions of the printed *Theſeida*, [*Manni, Ist. del Decam.* p. 52] had only examined this last edition; for I observe that a stanza which he has quoted (from some ms. as I suppose) is not near so correct as it is in the edition of 1475. As this stanza contains Boccace's own account of the intention of his poem, I shall transcribe it here from that edition. It is the beginning of his conclusion:

Poi che le Muse nude cominciare
 Nel conspetto de gli omeni ad andare,
 Già sur de quelli che [gia] le exercitaro
 Con bello stilo in *boneſto* parlare,
 E altri in *amoroso* lo operaro;
 Ma tu, o libro, primo al lor cantare
 Di *Marte* fai gli affanni sostenuti,
 Nel vulgar Latino mai piu non veduti.

This plainly alludes to a passage in Dante, *de Vulgari Eloquencia*, l. ii. c. ii. where, after having pointed out the three great

poem of about ten thousand lines to a little more than two thousand, without omitting any material circumstance.

The Theseida is distributed into twelve books or cantos.

B. I. Contains the war of Theseus with the Amazons, their submission to him, and his marriage with Hippolyta.

B. II. Theseus, having spent two years in Scythia, is reproached by Pirithous in a vision, and immediately returns to Athens with Hippolyta and her sister Emilia. He enters the city in triumph, finds the Grecian ladies in the temple of Clemenzia, marches to Thebes, kills Creon, &c. and brings home Palemone and Arcita, who are

Damnati---ad eterna prefone.

B. III. Emilia, walking in a garden and singing, is

subjects of poetry, viz. *arma, amorem, et rectitudinem* (war, love, and morality), and enumerated the illustrious writers upon each, he adds, *arma vero nullum Italum adhuc invenio poetasse*. Boccace therefore apparently prides himself upon having supplied the defect remarked by Dante, and upon being the first who taught the Italian Muses to sing of arms.-----Besides other variations for the worse, the fifth line in Salvini's copy is written thus ;

Ed altri in dolci modi l'operaro-----

by which means the allusion to Dante is rendered incomplete.

heard

heard and seen first by Arcita (10), who calls Palemone. They are both equally enamoured of her, but without any jealousy or rivalry. Emilia is supposed to see them at the window, and to be not displeased with their admiration.—Arcita is released at the request of Pirithous, takes his leave of Palemone with embraces, &c.

B. IV. Arcita, having changed his name to Pentheo, goes into the service of Menelaus at Mycenæ, and afterwards of Peleus at Ægina: from thence he returns to Athens, and becomes a favourite servant of Theseus, being known to Emilia, though to nobody else; till after some time he is overheard making his complaint in a wood, to which he usually resorted for that purpose, by Pamphilo, a servant of Palemone.

(10) In describing the commencement of this amour, which is to be the subject of the remainder of the poem, Chaucer has entirely departed from his author in three principal circumstances, and I think in each with very good reason. 1. By supposing Emilia to be seen first by Palamon, he gives him an advantage over his rival, which makes the catastrophe more consonant to poetical justice. 2. The picture which Boccace has exhibited of two young princes violently enamoured of the same object, without jealousy or rivalry, if not absolutely unnatural, is certainly very insipid and unpoetical. 3. As no consequence is to follow from their being seen by Emilia at this time, it is better, I think, to suppose, as Chaucer has done, that they are not seen by her.

B. V.

B. V. Upon the report of Pamphilo, Palemone begins to be jealous of Arcita, and is desirous to get out of prison, in order to fight with him. This he accomplishes with the assistance of Pamphilo, by changing clothes with Alimeto, a physician. He goes armed to the wood in quest of Arcita, whom he finds sleeping. At first they are very civil and friendly to each other (11); then Palemone calls upon Arcita to renounce his pretensions to Emilia, or to fight with him. After many long expostulations on the part of Arcita, they fight, and are discovered first by Emilia, who sends for Theseus. When he finds who they are, and the cause of their difference, he forgives them, and proposes the method of deciding their claim to Emilia by a combat of an hundred on each side, to which they gladly agree.

B. VI. Palemone and Arcita live splendidly at Athens, and send out messengers to summon their

(11) *En sieme se fer festa di bon core,
E li loro accidenti si narraro. Tbes. l. v.*

This is surely too much in the style of romance. Chaucer has made them converse more naturally; he has also judiciously avoided to copy Boccace in representing Arcite as more moderate than his rival.

friends,

friends, who arrive ; and the principal of them are severally described, viz. Lycurgus, Peleus, Phocus, Telamon, &c. Agamemnon, Menelaus, Castor and Pollux, &c. Nestor, Evander, Pirithous, Ulysses, Diomedes, Pygmalion, Minos, &c. with a great display of ancient history and mythology.

B. VII. Theseus declares the laws of the combat, and the two parties of an hundred on each side are formed. The day before the combat, Arcita, after having visited the temples of all the gods, makes a formal prayer to Mars. The prayer, being personified (12), is said to go and find Mars in his temple
in

- (12) Era alor forsi Marte in exercitio
 Di chiara far la parte ruginosa
 Del grande suo e horribile hospitio,
 Quando de Arcita *la oration* pietosa
 Pervenne li per fare il dato offitio,
 Tutta ne lo aspetto lagrimosa ;
 La qual divene di spavento muta,
 Come di Marte hebbe laca veduta. *Thes. l. vii.*

As this contrivance of personifying the prayers, and sending them to the several deities, is only in order to introduce a description of the respective temples, it will be allowed, I believe, that Chaucer has attained the same end by a more natural fiction. It is very probable that Boccace caught the idea of making the prayers persons from Homer, with whose works he was better acquainted than most of his contemporaries in this part of the world ; and there can be no doubt, I suppose, that Chaucer's
imagination,

in Thrace, which is described; and Mars, upon understanding the message, causes favourable signs to be given to Arcita. In the same manner Palemone closes his religious observances with a prayer to Venus. His prayer, being also personified, sets out for the temple of Venus on Mount Citherone, which is also described, and the petition is granted. Then the sacrifice of Emilia to Diana is described; her prayer; the appearance of the goddess, and the signs

imagination, in the expedient which he has substituted, was assisted by the occasional edifices which he had himself seen erected for the decoration of tournaments.-----The combat which follows having no foundation in ancient history or manners, it is no wonder that both poets should have admitted a number of incongruous circumstances into their description of it. The great advantage which Chaucer has over his original in this respect is, that he is much shorter. When we have read in the *Theseida* a long and learned catalogue of all the heroes of antiquity brought together upon this occasion, we are only the more surprised to see Theseus, in such an assembly, conferring the honour of knight-hood upon the two Theban chieftains.

E senza stare con non piccolo honore
 Cinse le spade a li dui scudieri,
 E ad Arcita Polluce e Castore
 Calciaro d'oro li sproni e volontieri,
 E Diomede e Ulixè di cuore
 Calzati a Palemone, e cavalieri
 Ambedui furono allora novelli
 Li innamorati Theban damigelli.

Thef. l. vii.

ef

of the two fires.—In the morning they proceed to the theatre with their respective troops, and prepare for the action. Arcita puts up a private prayer to Emilia, and harangues his troop publickly, and Palemone does the same.

B. VIII. Contains a description of the battle, in which Palemone is taken prisoner.

B. IX. The horse of Arcita, being frightened by a Fury sent from hell at the desire of Venus, throws him: however, he is carried to Athens in a triumphal chariot with Emilia by his side, is put to bed dangerously ill, and there by his own desire espouses Emilia.

B. X. The funeral of the persons killed in the combat. Arcita, being given over by his physicians, makes his will in discourse with Theseus, and desires that Palemone may inherit all his possessions, and also Emilia: he then takes leave of Palemone and Emilia, to whom he repeats the same request. Their lamentations. Arcita orders a sacrifice to Mercury (which Palemone performs for him), and dies.

B. XI. Opens with the passage of Arcita's soul to heaven, imitated from the beginning of the 9th book of Lucan. The funeral of Arcita. Description of the wood felled takes up six stanzas. Palemone builds a temple in honour of him, in which his whole history is painted. The description of this painting

painting is an abridgment of the preceding part of the poem.

B. XII. Theseus proposes to carry into execution Arcita's will by the marriage of Palemone and Emilia: this they both decline for some time in formal speeches; but at last are persuaded and married. The kings, &c. take their leave, and Palemone remains—in *gioia e in diporto con la sua dona nobile e cortese*.

From this sketch of the Theseida, it is evident enough, that Chaucer was obliged to Boccace (13)
for

(13) To whom Boccace was obliged is a more difficult subject of inquiry. That the story was of his own invention I think is scarce credible. He speaks of it himself as *very ancient*, [*Lett. alla Fiammetta. Biblioth. Smith. App. p. 141.*] “Trovata una
“ antichissima Storia, e al più delle genti non manifesta, in Lati-
“ no volgare, acciocchè più dilettaffe e massimamente a voi, che
“ già con sommo titolo le mie rime esaltaste, ho ridotta.” He then tells her that she will observe that what is related under the name of *one* of the two lovers and of Emilia, is very similar to what had actually passed between herself and him; and adds—
“ Se forse alcune cose soperchie vi fassono, il voler bene coprire
“ ciò che non era onesto manifestare, da noi due in fuori, e'l vo-
“ lere la storia seguire, ne sono cagione.” I am well aware, however, that declarations of this kind, prefixed to fabulous works, are not much to be depended upon. The wildest of the French romances are commonly said by the authors to be translated from some old Latin chronicle at St. Denys: and certainly the story of Palemone and Arcita, as related by Boccace, could not be *very ancient*. If it was of Greek original (as I rather suspect

for the plan and principal incidents of The Knight's Tale; and in the Notes upon that Tale I shall point out some passages, out of many more, which are literal translations from the Italian.

§ 10. When the Knight has finished his Tale, the Host with great propriety calls upon the *Monk*, as the next in rank among the men, to tell the next Tale: but, as it seems to have been the intention of Chaucer to avail himself of the variety of his characters, in order to distribute alternate successions of serious and comick in nearly equal proportions throughout his Work, he has contrived that the Host's arrangement shall be set aside by the intrusion of the drunken Miller, whose Tale is such as might be expected from his character and condition, a complete contrast to the Knight's.

§ 11. I have not been able to discover from whence the story of *The Miller's Tale* is taken; so that for the present I must give Chaucer credit for it as his own invention, though in general he appears

suspect), it must have been thrown into its present form after the Norman princes had introduced the manners of chivalry into their dominions in Sicily and Italy,-----The poem in modern Greek political verses, *De nuptiis Thesei et Emiliæ*, printed at Venice in 1529, is a mere translation of The Theseida. The author has even translated the prefatory epistle addressed by Boccaccio to The Fiammetta.

to

to have built his Tales, both serious and comick, upon stories which he found ready made. The great difference is, that in his serious pieces he often follows his author with the servility of a mere translator, and, in consequence, his narration is jejune and constrained; whereas in the comick, he is generally satisfied with borrowing a slight hint of his subject, which he varies, enlarges, and embellishes at pleasure, and gives the whole the air and colour of an original; a sure sign that his genius rather led him to compositions of the latter kind.

§ 12. The next Tale is told by the *Reve* (who is represented above [ver. 589] as a cholerick man) in revenge of The Miller's Tale. It has been generally said to be borrowed from The Decameron, d. ix. n. 6; but I rather think that both Boccace and Chaucer, in this instance, have taken whatever they have in common from an old *fabliau* or *conte* of an anonymous French rhymers, *De Gombert et des deux Clercs*. The reader may easily satisfy himself upon this head by casting his eye upon the French *Fabliau*, which has lately been printed with several others from mss. in France. See *Fabliaux et Contes*, Paris, 1756, t. ii. p. 115—124.

§ 13. *The Coke's Tale* is imperfect in all the mss. which

which I have had an opportunity of examining. In ms. *A.* it seems to have been entirely omitted; and indeed I cannot help suspecting that it was intended to be omitted, at least in this place, as in the Manciple's Prologue, when the Coke is called upon to tell a Tale, there is no intimation of his having told one before. Perhaps our Author might think that three Tales of *barlotrie*, as he calls it, together would be too much. However, as it is sufficiently certain, that the Coke's Prologue and the beginning of his Tale are genuine compositions, they have their usual place in this edition. There was not the same reason for inserting The Story of Gamelyn, which in some mss. is annexed to The Coke's Tale. It is not to be found in any of the mss. of the first authority; and the manner, style, and versification, all prove it to have been the work of an author much inferior to Chaucer. I did not therefore think myself warranted to publish it a second time among The Canterbury Tales, though, as a relick of our ancient poetry, and the foundation perhaps of Shakespeare's *As you Like It*, I could have wished to see it more accurately printed than it is in the only edition which we have of it.

§ 14. In the Prologue to *The Man of Lawe's Tale*,
VOL. I. H Chaucer

Chaucer recals our attention to the action (if I may so call it) of his drama, the journey of the pilgrims. They had set out soon after *the day began to spring*, [ver. 824, and f.] When the Reve was beginning to tell his Tale, they were in the neighbourhood of Deptford and Greenwich, and it was *half way prime*, that is, I suppose, *half way past prime*, about half an hour after seven A. M. [ver. 3904, 5.] How much further they were advanced upon their road at this time is not said; but the hour of the day is pointed out to us by two circumstances: we are first told [ver. 4422, 3,] that

-----the sonne

The ark of his artificial day had ronne

The fourthe part and half an hour and more-----

and secondly, [ver. 4432] that he was “five and “forty degrees high;” and this last circumstance is so confirmed by the mention of a corresponding phenomenon, that it is impossible to suspect any error in the number. The equality in length of shadows to their projecting bodies can only happen when the sun is at the height of five and forty degrees. Unfortunately, however, this description, though seemingly intended to be so accurate, will neither enable us to conclude with the mss. that it was *ten of the clock*,

clock, nor to fix upon any other hour, as the two circumstances just mentioned are not found to coincide in any part of the 28th (or of any other) day of April (14) in this climate. All that we can conclude with certainty is, that it was *not past* ten of the clock.

The compliments which Chaucer has introduced upon his own Writings are modest enough, and quite unexceptionable: but if the reflection [ver. 4497, and f.] upon those who relate such stories as that of Canace, or of Apollonius Tyrius, was levelled at Gower, as I very much suspect, it will be

(14) The 28th day of April, in the time of Chaucer, answering to our 6th or 7th of May, the sun, in the latitude of London, rose about half an hour after four, and the length of the artificial day was a little more than fifteen hours. *A fourth part* of fifteen hours (= three hours forty-five minutes) *and half an hour and more*----may be fairly computed to make together four hours and a half, which being reckoned from four one half A. M. give the time of the day exactly nine A. M. but the sun was not at the altitude of 45° till above half an hour after nine. In like manner if we take the 18th day (according to all the editions and some mss.) we shall find that the sun indeed was 45° high at ten A. M. exactly, but that *the fourth part* of the day *and half an hour and more* had been completed at nine A. M. -----In this uncertainty I have left the text as I found it in all the best mss. only *ms. H. A.* does not express the hour, but reads thus:

Yt was atte cloke ———

H 2

difficult

difficult to reconcile such an attack to our notions of the strict friendship which is generally supposed to have subsisted between the two bards (15). The attack too at this time must appear the more extraordinary on the part of our bard, as he is just going to put into the mouth of his Man of Lawe a Tale, of which almost every circumstance is borrowed from Gower. The fact is, that the story of Canace is related by Gower in his *Conf. Amant.* b. iii. and the story of (16) Apollonius (or Apollynus, as he is

(15) There is another circumstance which rather inclines me to believe that their friendship suffered some interruption in the latter part of their lives. In the new edition of the *Confessio Amantis*, which Gower published after the accession of Henry IV. the verses in praise of Chaucer [fol. 190. b. col. 1, ed. 1532] are omitted. [See *ms. Harl.* 3869.] Though perhaps the death of Chaucer at that time had rendered the compliment contained in those verses less proper than it was at first, that alone does not seem to have been a sufficient reason for omitting them; especially as the original date of the work, in the 16 of Richard II. is preserved. Indeed the only other alterations which I have been able to discover are toward the beginning and end, where every thing which had been said in praise of Richard in the first edition, is either left out or converted to the use of his successor.

(16) The history of Apollonius King of Tyre was supposed by Mark Welfer, when he printed it in 1595, to have been translated from the Greek a thousand years before. [*Fabr. Bib. Gr.* v. 6. p. 821.] It certainly bears strong marks of a Greek original, though it is not (that I know) now extant in that language.

is there called) in the viiiith book of the same work : so that if Chaucer really did not mean to reflect upon his old friend, his choice of these two instances was rather unlucky.

§ 15. *The Man of Lawe's Tale*, as I have just said, is taken, with very little variation, from Gower, *Conf. Amant.* b. ii. If there could be any doubt, upon a cursory perusal of the two Tales, which of them was written first, the following passage, I think,

guage. The rythmical poem under the same title, in modern Greek, was retranslated (if I may so speak) from the Latin. απο Λατινικης εις Ρωμαιικην γλωσσαν. [*Du Fresne, Index Author. ad Gloss. Græc.*] When Welfer printed it, he probably did not know that it had been published already (perhaps more than once) among the *Gesta Romanorum*. In an edition which I have, printed at Rouen in 1521, it makes the 154th chapter. Toward the latter end of the 12th century, Godfrey of Viterbo, in his *Pantheon*, or universal Chronicle, inserted this romance as part of the history of the third Antiochus, about 200 years before Christ. It begins thus, [*ms. Reg. 14 C. xi.*]

Filia Seleuci regis stat clara decore
Matreque defuncta pater arsit in ejus amore.
Res habet effectum, pressa puella dolet.

The rest is in the same metre, with one pentameter only to two hexameters.---Gower, by his own acknowledgment, took his story from the *Pantheon*, as the author (whoever he was) of *Pericles Prince of Tyre* professes to have followed Gower.

is sufficient to decide the question: (At *Ver.* 5505

Chaucer says—

Som men wold sayn how that the child Maurice

Doth this message until this emperour—

and we read in Gower that Maurice is actually sent upon this message to the emperor... We may therefore fairly conclude that in this passage Chaucer alludes to Gower, who had treated the same subject before him, but, as he insinuates, with less propriety.

I do not however suppose that Gower was the inventor of this Tale; it had probably passed through several hands before it came to him. I find among the *Cotton mss. Cal. A. ii. fol. 69*, an old English rhyme entitled *Emare*, in which the heroine under that name goes through a series of adventures for the most part exactly similar to those of Constance (17): but neither was the author of this rhyme the inventor of the story; for in fol. 70, *a*, he refers to his original in *Romans*, or French; and in the last stanza he tells us expressly—

Thys ys on of *Brytayne layes*

That was used by olde dayes.

Of

(17) The chief differences are, that *Emare* is originally exposed in a boat, for refusing to comply with the incestuous de-

sires

Of the *Brytayne layes* I shall have occasion to speak more at large, when I come to The Frankeleyn's Tale.

§ 16. The Man of Lawe's Tale, in the best mss. is followed by the Wife of Bathe's Prologue and Tale, and therefore I have placed them so here: not however merely in compliance with authority, but because, according to the common arrangement, in The Marchant's Tale (18) there is a direct reference to The Wife of Bathe's Prologue before it has been spoken. Such an impropriety I was glad

fires of the emperor her father; that she is driven on the coast of Galys or Wales, and married to the king of that country. The contrivances of the stepmother, and the consequences of them, are the same in both stories.

(18) V. 9559, Justine says to his brother January-----

The Wif of Bathe, if ye han understonde,
Of mariage, which ye han now in honde,
Declared hath ful wel in litel space-----

alluding very plainly to this Prologue of the Wife of Bath. The impropriety of such an allusion in the mouth of Justine is gross enough. The truth is, that Chaucer has inadvertently given to a character in The Merchant's Tale, an argument which the Merchant himself might naturally have used upon a similar occasion, after he had heard the Wife of Bath. If we suppose, with the editions, that the Wife of Bath had not at that time spoken her Prologue, the impropriety will be increased to an incredible degree.

to remove upon the authority of the best mss. though it had been acquiesced in by all former editors, especially as the same mss. pointed out to me another (I believe the true) place for both *The Marchant's* and *The Squier's Tales*, which have hitherto been printed immediately after *The Man of Lawe's*. But of that hereafter.

§ 17. The want of a few lines to introduce *The Wife of Bathe's Prologue*, is perhaps one of those defects hinted at above, which Chaucer would have supplied, if he had lived to finish his work. The extraordinary length of it, as well as the vein of pleasantry that runs through it, is very suitable to the character of the speaker. The greatest part must have been of Chaucer's own invention, though one may plainly see that he had been reading the popular invectives against marriage and women in general, such as *The Roman de la Rose*, *Valerius ad Rufinum de non ducendâ uxore*, and particularly *Hieronymus contra Jovinianum* (19).

§ 18.

(19) The holy Father, by way of recommending celibacy, has exerted all his learning and eloquence (and he certainly was not deficient in either) to collect together and aggravate whatever he could find to the prejudice of the female sex. Among other things, he has inserted his own translation (probably) of a long extract from what he calls-----*liber aureolus Theophrasti de nup-*

tiis-----

§ 18. *The Wife of Bathe's Tale* seems to have been taken from the story of Florent in Gower, *Conf. Amant.* b. i. or perhaps from an older narrative in the *Gesta Romanorum*, or some such collection, from which the story of Florent was itself borrowed. However that may have been, it must be allowed that Chaucer has considerably improved the fable by lopping off some improbable as well as unnecessary circumstances; and the transferring of the scene from Sicily to the court of King Arthur, must have had a very pleasing effect before the fabulous majesty of that court was quite obliterated.

The old ballad entitled *The Marriage of Sir Gawaine*, [*Ancient Poetry*, vol. iii. p. 11] which the learned editor thinks may have furnished Chau-

his-----Next to him in order of time was the treatise entitled *Epistola Valerii ad Rufinum de non ducenda uxore*, *ms. Reg. 12 D. iii.* It has been printed (for the similarity of its sentiments, I suppose) among the works of St. Jerome, though it is evidently of a much later date. Tanner (from *Wood's ms. Coll.*) attributes it to Walter Map, [*Bib. Brit. v. Map.*] I should not believe it to be older, as John of Salisbury, who has treated of the same subject in his *Polycrat.* l. viii. c. xi. does not appear to have seen it.-----To these two books Jean de Meun has been obliged for some of the severest strokes in his *Roman de la Rose*; and Chaucer has transfused the quintessence of all the three works (upon the subject of matrimony) into his *Wife of Bathe's Prologue* and *Merchant's Tale*.

cer with this Tale, I should rather conjecture (with deference to so good a judge in these matters) to have been composed by one who had read both Gower and Chaucer.

§ 19. *The Tales of the Frere and the Sompnour* are well ingrafted upon that of *The Wife of Bath*. The ill humour which shews itself between those two characters is quite natural, as no two professions at that time were at more constant variance. The regular clergy, and particularly the Mendicant Freres, affected a total exemption from all ecclesiastical jurisdiction, except that of the Pope, which made them exceedingly obnoxious to the bishops, and of course to all the inferior officers of the national hierarchy.

I have not been able to trace either of these Tales to any author older than Chaucer, and possibly they may both have been built upon some traditional pleasantries, which were never before committed to writing.—I am obliged to Mr. Steevens for pointing out to me a story, which has a great resemblance in its principal incidents to *The Frere's Tale*: it is quoted by D'Artigny, *Mémoires d'Histoire*, &c. t. iii. p. 238, from a collection of sermons by an anonymous Dominican, printed about the beginning of the 16th century, under the title of *Sermones Discipuli*.

§ 20. *The Clerke's Tale* is in a different strain from the three preceding. He tells us in his Prologue, that he learned it from Petrarch at Padua; and this (by the way) is all the ground that I can find for the notion that Chaucer had seen Petrarch (20) in Italy.

It

(20) I can find no older or better authority for this notion than the following passage in Speght's life of Chaucer, prefixed to the edition in 1597: "Some write that he with Petrarke was present at the marriage of Lionell Duke of Clarence with Violante, daughter of Galeasius Duke of Millaine; yet Paullus Jovius nameth not Chaucer; but Petrarke, he sayth, was there." It appears from an instrument in Rymer, [*Liberat.* 4^{to} Ed. III. m. 1] that the Duke of Clarence passed from Dover to Calais, in his way to Milan, in the spring of 1368, with a retinue of 457 men and 1280 horses. That Chaucer might have attended the duke upon this occasion is not impossible. He had been, probably, for some time in the king's service, and had received the year before a grant of an annuity of 20 marks--- "Pro bono servitio, quod dilectus Vallettus noster, Galfridus Chaucer, nobis impendit et impendet in futurum." [*Pat.* 4^{to} Ed. III. p. 1. m. 13, *ap. Rymer.*] There is a curious account of the feast at this marriage in the *Chronica di Mantoua* of Aliprandi, [*Murator. Antiq. Med. Ævi*, vol. v. p. 1187, *et seq.*] but he does not give the names of the

Grandi Signori e Baroni Inghilese,

who were (as he says)

Con Messere Lionell' in compagnia.

The most considerable of them were probably those twenty-six
(knights

It is not easy to say why Chaucer should choose to own an obligation for this Tale to Petrarch rather than to Boccace, from whose Decameron, d. x. n. 10, it was translated by Petrarch in 1373 (the year before his death), as appears by a remarkable letter which he

(knights and others) who, before their setting out for Milan, procured the king's license to appoint attornies-general to act for them here. [*Franc.* 42 Ed. III. m. 8. *ap.* Rymer.] The name of Chaucer does not appear among them.----The embassy to Genoa, to which Chaucer was appointed in November 1372, might possibly have afforded him another opportunity of seeing Petrarch. But in the first place, it is uncertain whether he ever went upon that embassy. If he did, the distance from Genoa to Padua, where Petrarch resided, is considerable; and I cannot help thinking, that a reverential visit from a minister of the King of England would have been so flattering to the old man, that either he himself, or some of his biographers, must have recorded it. On the other hand, supposing Chaucer at Genoa, it is to be presumed that he would not have been deterred by the difficulties of a much longer journey from paying his respects to the first literary character of the age: and it is remarkable, that the time of this embassy, in 1373, is the precise time at which he could have learned the story of Griseldis from Petrarch at Padua; for Petrarch, in all probability, made his translation *in that very year*, and he died in July of the year following.---The inquisitive and judicious author of *Mémoires pour la vie de Petrarque* gave us hopes [*Pref. to t. ii. p. 6*] that he would shew that Chaucer was in connection (*en liaison*) with Petrarch. As he has not fulfilled his promise in a later (I fear the last) volume of his very ingenious work, I suspect that his more accurate researches have not enabled him to verify an opinion which he probably at first adopted upon the credit of some biographer of Chaucer.

sent

sent with his translation to Boccace. [*Opp. Petrarch.* p. 540—7, edit. Bas. 1581.] It should seem too from the same letter, that the story was not invented by Boccace, for Petrarch says, “that it had always pleased him when he heard it many years before” (21), whereas he had not seen The Decameron till very lately.

§ 21. In the *ballade* with which the Clerk concludes his Tale, I have changed the order of the three last stanzas, so as to make it end—

And let him *care*, and *wepe*, and wringe, and *waile*—

(21)---“Cum et mihi semper ante multos annos audita placuisset, et tibi usque adeo placuisse perpenderem, ut vulgari eam stylo tuo censueris non indignam, et sine operis, tibi rhetoricum disciplina validiora quælibet collocari jubet.” *Petrarch. loc. cit.* M. l'Abbé de Sade [*Mem. de Petr.* t. iii. p. 797] says, that the story of Griseldis is taken from an ancient ms. in the library of M. Foucault, entitled *Le Parement des Dames*. If this should have been said upon the authority of Manni, [*Ist. del Decam.* p. 603] as I very much suspect; and if Manni himself meant to refer to M. Galland's *Discours sur quelques anciens Poetes*, [*Mem. de l'Acad. des I. et B. L.* t. ii. p. 686] we must look still further for the original of Boccace's novel. M. Galland says nothing, as I observe, of the antiquity of the ms. “Le titre,” he says, “est *Le Parement des Dames*, avec des explications en prose, où l'on trouve l'histoire de Griseldis que feu M. Perrault a mise en vers:” but he says also expressly, that it was a work of Olivier de la Marche, who was not born till many years after the death of Boccace.

and

and immediately after I have placed *The Marchant's Prologue*, beginning——

Weping and wailing, care and other sorwe,

I have enough.----

This arrangement, which recommends itself at first sight, is also supported by so many mss. of the best authority, that, without great negligence or dulness, I could not have either overlooked or rejected it, especially as the whole turn of *The Marchant's Prologue*, and the express mention of Grifilde in ver. 9100, demonstrate that he is supposed to speak with *The Clerke's Tale* fresh in his memory.

§ 22. The scene of *The Marchant's Tale* is laid in Italy, but none of the names except Damian and Justin seem to be Italian, but rather made at pleasure; so that I doubt whether the story be really of Italian growth. The adventure of the *Pear-tree* I find in a small collection of Latin fables, written by one Adolphus, in elegiack verses of his fashion, in the year 1315. As this fable has never been printed but once, and in a book not commonly to be met with, I shall transcribe below (22) the material parts of it, and

(22) *Adolphi Fabulæ*, ap. Leyser. *Hist. Poet. Medii Ævi*, p. 2008.

and I dare say the reader will not be very anxious to see any more.

Whatever

Fabula I.

Cæcus erat quidam, cui pulcra virago ———
————— ——— ——— ——— ———

In curtis viridi resident hi cespites quadam
Luce. Petit mulier robur adire Pyri.
Vir favet, amplectens mox robur ubique lacertis.
Arbor adunca fuit, qua latuit juvenis.
Amplexatur eam dans basia dulcia. Terram
Incepit colere vomere cum proprio.
Audit vir strepitum. nam sæpe carentia sensus
Unius in reliquo, nosco, vigere solet.
Heu miser! exclamat; te lædit adulter ibidem.
Conqueror hoc illi qui dedit esse mihi.
Tunc Deus omnipotens, qui condidit omnia verbo,
Qui sua membra probat, vascula velut figulus,
Restituens aciem misero, tonat illico; Fallax
Femina, cur tanta fraude nocere cupis?

————— ——— ——— ——— ———
Percipit illa virum. Vultu respondet alacri:
Magna dedi medicis; non tibi cura fuit.
Ast, ubi lustra sua satis uda petebat Apollo,
Candida splendescens Cynthia luce mera,
Tunc sopor irrepsit mea languida corpora: quædam
Astitit. insonuit auribus illa meis.
Ludere cum juvene studeas in roboris alto;
Prisca viro dabitur lux cito, crede mihi.
Quod feci. Dominus ideo tibi munera lucis
Contulit. idcirco munera redde mihi.
Addidit ille fidem mulieri, de prece cujus
Se sanum credit, mittit et omne nefas.

The same story is inserted among the Fables of Alphonse,
printed

Whatever was the real original of this Tale, the machinery of the Faeries, which Chaucer has used so happily, was probably added by himself; and indeed I cannot help thinking that his Pluto and Proserpina were the true progenitors of Oberon and Titania (23), or rather that they themselves have, once at least, deigned to revisit our poetical system under the latter names.

§ 23. *The Prologue to The Squier's Tale* appears now for the first time in print. Why it has been omitted by all former editors I cannot guess, except, perhaps, because it did not suit with the place which (for reasons best known to themselves) they were determined to assign to the Squier's Tale, that is, after The Man of Lawe's and before the Marchant's. I have chosen rather to follow the mss. of the best authority in placing *The Squier's Tale* after the Mar-

printed by Caxton in English, with those of Æsop, Avian, and Pogge, without date; but I do not find it in the original Latin of Alphonfus, *ms. Reg. 10 B. xii.* or in any of the French translations of his work that I have examined.

(23) This observation is not meant to extend further than the King and Queen of Faery, in whose characters I think it is plain that Shakespeare, in imitation of Chaucer, has dignified our Gothick elves with the manners and language of the classical gods and goddesses. In the rest of his Faery system Shakespeare seems to have followed Drayton and the popular superstition of his own time.

chant's,

chant's, and in connecting them together by this Prologue, agreeably, as I am persuaded, to Chaucer's intention. The lines which have usually been printed by way of Prologue to the Squier's Tale, as I believe them to have been really composed by Chaucer, though not intended for the Squier's Prologue, I have prefixed to The Shipman's Tale, for reasons which I shall give when I come to speak of that Tale.

§ 24. I should have been very happy if the mss. which have furnished The Squier's Prologue had supplied the deficient part of his Tale: but I fear the judgment of Milton was too true, that this story was *left half-told* by the Author. I have never been able to discover the probable original of this Tale; and yet I should be very hardly brought to believe, that the whole, or even any considerable part of it, was of Chaucer's invention.

§ 25. We are now arrived with the common editions (though by a different course) at The Frankleine's Tale; and here again we must be obliged to the mss. not indeed, as in the last instance, for a *new* Prologue, but for authorizing us to prefix to this Tale of The Frankleyn a Prologue which in the common editions is prefixed to The Tale of *the*

Marchant, together with the true Prologue of that Tale, as printed above. It is scarce conceivable how these two Prologues could ever be joined together, and given to the same character, as they are not only entirely unconnected, but also in one point directly contradictory to each other; for in that which is properly *the Marchant's*, he says expressly [ver. 9110], that he had been married *two monthes and not more*; whereas in the other, the speaker's chief discourse is about *his son*, who is *grown up*. This therefore, upon the authority of the best mss. I have restored to the *Frankelain*; and I must observe, that the sentiments of it are much more suitable to his character than to that of the *Marchant*. It is quite natural that a wealthy landholder of a generous disposition, as he is described [ver. 332—62], who has been Sheriff, Knight of the Shire, &c. should be anxious to see his son (as we say) *a gentleman*, and that he should talk slightly of money in comparison with polished manners and virtuous endowments: but neither the character which Chaucer has drawn of his *Marchant*, nor our general notions of the profession *at that time*, prepare us to expect from him so liberal a strain of thinking.

§ 26. *The Frankelain's Tale*, as he tells us himself,

is taken from a British lay (24); and the names of persons and places, as well as the scene and circumstances

(24) "Les premieres chansons Françoises furent nommées des Lais," says M. de la Ravalierre, *Poes. du Roi de Nav.* t. i. p. 215; and so far I believe he is right. But I see no foundation for supposing with him (in the same page) that the lay was *une sorte d'élégie*, and that it was derived *du mot Latin* Lessus, *qui signifie des plaintes*; or [in p. 217] that it was *la chanson---la plus majestueuse et la plus grave*. It seems more probable, that *lai* in French was anciently a generical term, answering to *song* in English. The passage which M. de la Ravalierre has quoted from *Le Brut*,

Molt sot de *lais*, molt sot de notes——

is thus rendered by our Layamon. [See the *Essay on the Language and Versification of Chaucer*, n. 46.]

Ne cuthe na mon swa muchel of *song*.

The same word is used by Peirol d'Alvergnas, *ms. Crofts*, fol. 85, to denote the *songs of birds* (certainly not of the *plaintive* kind).

Et li ausell s'en van enamoran

L'uns per l'autre, et fan vantas (or *cantas*) et *lais*.

For my own part, I am inclined to believe that *liod*, Island. *lied*, Teuton. *leoth*, Saxon, and *lai*, French, are all to be deduced from the same Gothick original.---But beside this general sense, the name of *lay* was particularly given to the French translations of certain poems originally composed in Armorican Bretagne, and in the Armorican language: I say *the French translations*, because *lay* not being (as I can find) an Armorican word, could hardly have been the name by which a species of poetry not im-

stances of the story, make this account extremely probable. The lay itself is either lost or buried (perhaps

ported from France was distinguished by the first composers in Bretagne.-----The chief (perhaps the only) collection of these *lais* that is now extant was translated into French octosyllable verse, by a poetess who calls herself *Marie*, the same (without doubt) who made the translation of *Esope*, quoted by Pasquier [*Rech.* l. viii. ch. 1] and Fauchet [*L.* ii. n. 84], and placed by them in the reign of St. Louis, about the middle of the 13th century. Both her works have been preserved together in *ms.* *Harl.* 978, in a fair hand, which I see no reason to judge more recent than the latter end of that century.---The *lais* (with which only we are at present concerned) were addressed by her to some king, fol. 139.

En le honur de vous, noble reis,
Ki tant estes pruz e curteis,
A ki tute joie se encline,
E en ki qu'er tuz biens racine,
M'entremis des *lais* assembler,
Par rime faire e raconter.---

A few lines after she names herself,

Oez, Seignurs, ke dit *Marie*.---

The titles of the poems in this collection, to the number of twelve, are recited in the Harleian Catalogue: they are, in general, the names of the principal persons in the several stories, and are most of them evidently Armorican; and I think no one can read the stories themselves without being persuaded that they were either really translated from the Armorican language, or at least composed by one who was well acquainted with that language

haps for ever) in one of those sepulchres of mss. which, by courtesy, are called Libraries. But there are

guage and country.-----Though these poems of Marie have of late been so little known as to have entirely escaped the researches of Fauchet and other French antiquaries, they were formerly in high estimation. Denis Pyramus, a very tolerable versifier of the Legend of St. Edmund the King [*ms. Cotton, Dom. A. xi.*], allows that Dame Marie (as he calls her) had great merit in the composition of her lays, *though they are not all true*-----

E si en est ele mult loee,
E la ryme par tut amee.

A translation of her *lays* (as it should seem) into one of the northern languages, was among the books given by Gabriel de la Gardie to the university of Upsal, under the title of *Varia Britannorum Fabulæ*. [See the description of the book by Stephanus, in *Cat. Libb. Septent.* at the end of *Hickes, Gr. A. S. ed.* 1689, 4to, p. 180.] That Chaucer had read them I think extremely probable, not only from a passage in his *Dreme* [ver. 1820---1926], which seems to have been copied from the lay of Elidus, but also from the manner in which he makes the Frankelien speak of the Bretons and their compositions. [See the note on ver. 11021.]---However, in Chaucer's time there were other British lays extant beside this collection by Marie. Emarè has been mentioned before, § 15. An old English ballad of Sir Gowther [*ms. Reg. 17 B. xliii.*] is said by the writer to have been taken out of one of the *layes of Britanye*: in another place he says---*the first lay of Britanye*. The original of The Frankelien's Tale was probably a third. There were also lays which did not pretend to be British, as *Le Lay d'Aristote*, *Li Lais de l'Oiselet*, [*Fabliaux, tom. i.*] *Le Lai du Corn*, by Robert Bikez, [*ms.*

are two imitations of it extant by Boccace, the first in the fifth book of his *Philocopo*, and the second in *The Decam. d. x. n. 5*. They agree in every respect with each other, except that the scene and the names are different, and in the latter the narration is less prolix and the style less flowery than in the former, which was a juvenile work (25). The only material

[*ms. Bod. 1687*] is said by him to have been invented by Garaduc, who accomplished the adventure. In the ballad entitled *The Boy and the Mantle*, [*Anc. Poet. v. iii. p. 1*] which I suspect to have been made up out of this lay and *Le Court Mantel*, the successful knight is called Cradock. Robert Bikez says further, that the horn was still to be seen at Cirencester;

Q'fust a *Cirincetre*
 A une haute feste,
 La pureit il veer
 Icest corn tout pur veir.
 Ceo dist Robert Bikez——.

In none of these lays do we find the qualities attributed to that sort of composition by M. de la Raviere. According to these examples we should rather define the lay to be a species of serious narrative poetry, of a moderate length, in a simple style and light metre. Serious is here opposed (not to pleasant, but) to ludicrous, in order to distinguish the lay from the *conte* or *fabliau*; as on the other hand its moderate length distinguishes it from the *geste*, or common *roman*. All the lays that I have seen are in light metre, not exceeding eight syllables. See the *Essay on the Language, &c. of Chaucer*, n. 60.

(25) I saw once an edition of the *Philocopo*, printed at Venice,

1503,

terial point in which Boccace seems to have departed from his original is this : instead of *the removal of the rocks*, the lady desires *a garden, full of the flowers and fruits of May, in the month of January*; and some such alteration was certainly necessary when the scene came to be removed from Bretagne to Spain and

1503, fol. with a letter at the end of it, in which the publisher, Hieronymo Squarzafiglio, says (if I do not misremember) " that this work was written by Boccace at twenty years of age " (about 1333), while he was at Naples in the house of John " Barrile." [Johannes Barrillus is called by Boccace [*Geneal. Deor.* l. xiv. c. 19] *magni spiritus homo*. He was sent by King Robert to attend Petrarch to his coronation at Rome, and is introduced by the latter in his second eclogue under the name of Idæus; " ab Idâ, monte Cretensi, unde et ipse oriundus fuit." *Intentiones Eclogarum Franc. Petrarchæ*, ms. Bod. 558.] Not knowing at present where to find that edition, I am obliged to rely upon my memory only for this story, which I think highly probable, though it is not mentioned (as I recollect) by any of the other biographers of Boccace. A good life of Boccace is still much wanted.---The adventures of Florio and Biancofiore (which make the principal subject of the *Philocopo*) were famous long before Boccace, as he himself informs us, l. i. p. 6. edit. 1723. Floris and Blancaflor are mentioned as illustrious lovers by Matfres Eymengau de Beziers, a Languedocian poet, in his *Breviari d'amor*, dated in the year 1288, ms. Reg. 19 C. i. fol. 199. It is probable however that the story was enlarged by Boccace, and particularly I should suppose that the Love-questions in l. v. (the fourth of which questions contains the novel referred to in the text) were added by him.

Italy, as it is in Boccace's novels (26). I should guess that Chaucer has preserved pretty faithfully the principal incidents of the British Tale, though he has probably thrown in some smaller circumstances to embellish his narration. The long list of virtuous women in Dorigene's soliloquy is plainly copied from *Hieronymus contra Jovinianum*.

§ 27. Thus far I flatter myself I have been not unsuccessful in restoring the true order and connection with each other of The Clerke's, The Marchante's, The Squiere's, and The Frankeleine's Tales: but with regard to the next step which I have taken, I must own myself more dubious. In all the editions the Tales of The Nonne and The Chanone's Yeman precede The Doctoure's; but the best mss. agree in removing those Tales to the end of The Nonne's Preefe's; and I have not scrupled to adopt this arrangement, which, I think, is indisputably established by the following consideration. When the Monk is called upon for his Tale, the

(26) The Conte Boiardo (the precursor and model of Ariosto) in his *Orlando Inamorato*, l. i. ca. 12. has inserted a tale upon the plan of Boccace's two novels, but with considerable alterations, which have carried the story, I apprehend, still further from its British original.

pilgrims

pilgrims were near Rochester [ver. 13932]; but when the Chanon overtakes them, they were advanced to Boughton-under-Blee [ver. 16024], twenty miles beyond Rochester; so that the Tale of The Chanone's Yeman, and that of The Nonne to which it is annexed, cannot with any propriety be admitted till after The Monke's Tale, and consequently not till after The Nonne's Preefte's, which is inseparably linked to that of The Monk.

§ 28. These two Tales therefore of The Nonne and The Chanone's Yeman being removed out of the way, The Doctoure's comes clearly next to The Frankeleine's: but how they are to be connected together, and whether at all, is a matter of doubt. What I have printed by way of Prologue to The Doctoure's Tale, I found in one of the best mss. but only in one; in the others it has no Prologue. The first line applies so naturally and smartly to the Frankeleine's conclusion, that I am strongly inclined to believe it from the hand of Chaucer; but I cannot say so much for the five following: I would therefore only wish these lines to be received for the present (according to the law-pharse) *de bene esse*, till they shall either be more authentically established, or superseded by the discovery of the genuine Prologue.

§ 29.

§ 29. In *The Doctoure's Tale*, beside Livy (who is quoted), Chaucer may possibly have followed Gower in some particulars, who has also related the story of Virginia, *Conf. Amant.* b. vii. but he has not been a servile copyist of either of them.

§ 30. *The Pardonere's Tale* has a Prologue which connects it with *The Doctoure's*. There is also a pretty long preamble, which may either make part of the Prologue, or of the Tale. The mss. differ in this point. I have chosen to throw it into the Tale, and to confine the Prologue to what I suppose to be its proper use, the introduction of the new speaker. When he is once in complete possession of his office of entertaining the company, his prefaces or digressions should all, I think, be equally considered as parts of his Tale.

The mere outline of *The Pardonere's Tale* is to be found in the *Cento Nouvelle Antiche*, Nov. lxxxii.

§ 31. *The Tale of The Shipman* in the best mss. has no Prologue: what has been printed as such in the common editions is evidently spurious. To supply this defect, I have ventured, upon the authority of one ms. (and I confess not one of the best), to prefix to this Tale the Prologue which has usually been prefixed to the Tale of the Squier. As this Prologue

was

was undoubtedly composed by Chaucer, it must have had a place somewhere in this edition; and if I cannot prove that it was really intended by him for this place, I think the reader will allow that it fills the vacancy extremely well. The Pardonere's Tale may very properly be called a *thrifty tale*, and he himself a *lernered man* [ver. 12905—8]; and all the latter part, though highly improper in the mouth of the *curteis Squier*, is perfectly suited to the character of the Shipman.

This Tale is generally supposed to be taken from The Decameron, d. viii. n. 1. but I should rather believe that Chaucer was obliged to some old French *fableour*, from whom Boccace had also borrowed the ground-work of his novel, as in the case of The Reve's Tale. Upon either supposition, a great part of the incidents must probably have been of his own invention.

§ 32. The transition from the Tale of The Shipman to that of The Prioress is happily managed. I have not been able to discover from what legende of The Miracles of our Lady The Prioress's Tale is taken. From the scene being laid in Asia, it should seem that this was one of the oldest of the many stories which have been propagated at different times, to
excite

excite or justify several merciless persecutions of the Jews upon the charge of murdering Christian children (27). The story of Hugh of Lincoln, which is mentioned in the last stanza, is placed by Matthew Paris under the year 1255.

§ 33. Next to the Prioress *Chaucer* himself is called upon for his Tale. In the Prologue he has dropped a few touches descriptive of his own person and manner, by which we learn that he was used to look much upon the ground, was of a corpulent habit, and reserved in his behaviour. His *Rime of Sire*

(27) In the first four months of the *Acta Sanctorum*, by Bollandus, I find the following names of children canonized, as having been murdered by Jews: xxv Mart. Willielmus Norwicensis. 1144. Richardus, Parisiis. 1179. xvii Apr. Rudolphus, Bernæ. 1287. Wernerus, Wefaliæ. *an eod.* Albertus, Poloniæ. 1598. I suppose the remaining eight months would furnish at least as many more. See a Scottish ballad [*Rel. of Anc. Poet.* v. i. p. 32] upon one of these supposed murders. The editor has very ingeniously conjectured that *Mirryland*, in ver. 1, is a corruption of *Milan*. Perhaps the real occasion of the ballad may have been what is said to have happened at Trent, in 1475, to a boy called Simon. The Cardinal Hadrian, about fifty years after, mentioning the rocks of Trent, adds, “quo Judæi ob Simonis cædem ne aspirare quidem audent.” *Præf. ad librum de Serm. Lat.* The change of the name in the song from Simon to Hugh is natural enough in *this* country, where similar stories of Hugh of Norwich and Hugh of Lincoln had been long current.

Thopas

Thopas was clearly intended to ridicule the *palpable-gross* fictions of the common rhymers of that age, and still more, perhaps, the meanness of their language and versification. It is full of phrases taken from *Ifumbras*, *Li beaus desconus*, and other romances in the same style, which are still extant. A few of his imitations of them will be pointed out in the Notes.

§ 34. For the more complete reprobation of this species of rhyming, even the Host, who is not to be suspected of too refined a taste, is made to cry out against it, and to cut short Sire *Thopas* in the midst of his adventures. Chaucer has nothing to say for his rhyme, but that *it is the beste he can* [ver. 13856], and readily consents to tell another Tale; but, having just laughed so freely at the bad poetry of his time, he might think it, perhaps, too invidious to exhibit a specimen of better in his own person; and therefore his other Tale is in prose, a mere translation from *Le Livre de Melibee et de Dame Prudence*, of which several copies are still preserved in ms. (28).

(28) Two copies of this work are in the Museum, *mss. Reg.* 19 C. vii. and 19 C. xi. in French prose. Du Fresnoy, *Biblioth. des Romans*, v. ii. p. 248, mentions two copies of the same work *en vers*, dans la *Bibliothèque Seguier*.

It

It is in truth, as he calls it [ver. 13868], *a moral tale vertuous*, and was probably much esteemed in its time: but in this age of levity, I doubt some readers will be apt to regret that he did not rather give us the remainder of Sire Thopas.

§ 35. *The Prologue of The Monke's Tale* connects it with Melibee. The Tale itself is certainly formed upon the plan of Boccace's great work, *Decasibus Virorum Illustrium*: but Chaucer has taken the several stories of which it is composed from different authors, who will be particularized in the Notes.

§ 36. After a reasonable number of melancholy ditties, or tragedies, as the Monk calls them, he is interrupted by the Knight, and the Host addresses himself to the Nonne's Preeft to tell them *fwiche thing as may their hertes glade*.

The Tale of the Nonne's Preeft is cited by Dryden, together with that of *The Wife of Bath*, as of Chaucer's own invention. But that great poet was not very conversant with the authors of which Chaucer's library seems to have been composed. *The Wife of Bathe's Tale* has been shewn above to be taken from Gower; and the fable of the Cock and the Fox, which makes the ground of *The Nonne's Preefte's Tale*, is clearly borrowed from a collection of *Æsop*
pean

pean and other fables by Marie, a French poetess, whose collection of lays has been mentioned before in n. 24. As her fable is short and well told, and has never been printed, I shall insert it here at length (29), and the more willingly, because it furnishes a convincing

(29) From *ms. Harl.* 978. f. 76.

D un cok recunte, ki estot
 Sur un femer, e si chantot.
 Par de lez li vient un gupilz,
 Si l'apela par muz beaus diz.
 Sire, fet il, muz te vei bel;
 Unc ne vi si gent oïfel.
 Clere voiz as fur tute rien,
 Fors tun pere, qe jo vi bien;
 Unc oïfel meuz ne chanta;
 Mes il le fist meuz, kar il cluna.
 Si puis jeo fere, dist li cocs.
 Les eles bat, les oilz ad clos,
 Chanter quida plus clerement,
 Li gupil faut, e fil prent;
 Vers la forest od lui s'en va.
 Par mi un champ, u il passa,
 Curent apres tut li pastur;
 Li chiens le huent tut entour.
 Veit le gupill, ki le cok tient,
 Mar le guaina si par eus vient.
 Va, fet li cocs, si lur esclie,
 Qe sui tuens, ne me larras mie.
 Li gupil volt parler en haut,
 E li cocs de sa buche faut.
 Sur un haut fust s'est muntez.
 Quant li gupilz s'est reguardez,

Mut

convincing proof how able Chaucer was to work up an excellent Tale out of very small materials.

§ 37.

Mut par se tient enfantillé,
 Que li cocs l'ad si enginné.
 De mal talent e de droit ire
 La buche commence a maudire,
 Ke parole quant devereit taire.
 Li cocs respunt, si dei jeo faire,
 Maudire l'oïl, ki volt cluiner,
 Quant il deit garder e guaier,
 Que māl ne vient a lur Seignur.
 Ceo sunt li fol tut li plusur,
 Parolent quant deivent taïser,
 Teïsent quant il deivent parler.

The resemblance of Chaucer's Tale to this fable is obvious; and it is the more probable that he really copied from Marie, because no such fable is to be found either in the Greek *Æsop*, or in any of the Latin compilations (that I have seen) which went about in the dark ages under the name of *Æsop*. Whether it was invented by Marie, or whether she translated it, with the rest of her fables, from the Anglo-Saxon version of *Æsop* by King Alfred (as she says herself), I cannot pretend to determine. Though no Anglo-Saxon version of *Æsop* be now (as I can find) extant, there may have been one formerly, which may have passed, like many other translations into that language, under the name of Alfred; and it may be urged in support of the probability of Marie's positive assertion, that she appears, from passages in her *lais*, to have had some knowledge of English. I must observe, that the name of the king, whose English version she professes to follow, is differently stated in different mss. In the best ms. *Harl.* 978, it is plainly *Li reis Alured*; in a later ms. *Vesp. B.* xiv. it is *Li reis Henris*. Pasquier [*Recherches*, l. viii. c. i.] calls him *Li roy Auvert*; and Du Chesne (as quoted by Menage, v. *Roman*)

§ 37. The sixteen lines, which are printed at the end of The Nonne's Preeſte's Tale, might perhaps more properly be conſidered as the beginning of the Prologue to the ſucceeding Tale, if it were certain what Tale was intended to ſucceed. In both Dr. Afkew's mſſ. the laſt of theſe lines is read thus,—

Seide unto the *Nunne* as ye ſhul heer-----

and there are fix more lines to introduce her Tale: but, as theſe fix lines are manifeſtly forged for the purpoſe, I have choſen rather to adhere to the other mſſ. which acknowledge themſelves defective in this part, and give us The Nonne's Tale, as I have done, without any introduction. It is very probable, I think, that Chaucer himſelf had not determined whether he ſhould connect The Nonne's Tale with that of The Nonne's Preeſt, or whether he ſhould interpoſe a Tale or two, or perhaps more, between them.

The Tale of the Nonne is almoſt literally tranſlated from the life of St. Cecilia in the *Legenda Aurea* of Jacobus Januensis. It is mentioned by Chaucer as a ſeparate work in his *Legende of Good Women* [ver.

Roman) *Li rois Mires*: but all the copies agree in making Marie declare that ſhe tranſlated her work *de l'Anglois en Roman*. A Latin *Æſop*, mſ. Reg. 15 A. vii. has the ſame ſtory of an Engliſh verſion by order of a *Rex Angliæ Affrus*.

426], under the title of *The Life of Seint Cecile*, and it still retains evident marks that it was not originally composed in the form of a Tale to be *spoken* by *the Nonne* (30). However, there can be no doubt that Chaucer meant to incorporate it into this collection of Canterbury Tales, as the Prologue of the Chanone's Yeman expressly refers to it.

§ 38. The introduction of *The Chanone's Yeman* to tell a Tale, at a time when so many of the original characters remain to be called upon, appears a little extraordinary. It should seem that some sudden resentment had determined Chaucer to interrupt the regular course of his Work, in order to insert a satire against the alchemists. That their pretended science was much cultivated about this time (31), and produced

(30) The whole introduction is in the style of a person writing, and not of one speaking. If we compare it with the introduction to *The Prioreſſe's Tale*, the difference will be very striking. See particularly ver. 15546 ;

Yet pray I you that *reden* that I *write*——

and in ver. 15530 the relater, or rather writer of the Tale, in all the mss. (except one of middling authority) is called *unworthy son of Eve*. Such little inaccuracies are strong proofs of an unfinished work. See before, p. 76.

(31) The first considerable coinage of gold in this country was

duced its usual evils, may fairly be inferred from the act which was passed soon after, 5 Hen. IV. c. iv. to make

was begun by Edward III. in the year 1343, and according to Camden [in his *Remains*, art. *Money*], "the alchemists did affirm (as an unwritten verity) that the Rosenobles, which were coined soon after, were made by projection or multiplication alchemical of Raymond Lully in the Tower of London." In proof of this, "besides the tradition of the rabbies in that faculty," they alledged "the inscription; *Jesus autem transiens per medium eorum ibat*;" which they profoundly expounded, as *Jesus passed invisible and in most secret manner by the midst of Pharisees, so that gold was made by invisible and secret art amidst the ignorant*. But others say that text was the only amulet used in that credulous warfaring age to escape dangers in battles. Thus Camden. I rather believe it was an amulet, or charm, principally used against thieves, upon the authority of the following passage of Sir John Mandevile, c. x. p. 137: "And an half myle fro Nazareth is the lepe of oure Lord; for the Jewes ladden him upon an highe roche for to make him lepe down and have slayn him: but Jesu passed amonges hem, and lepte upon another roche; and yit ben the steppes of his feet sene in the roche where he allyghte. And therfore seyn sum men whan thei dreden hem of thefes on ony weye, or of enemyes, *Jesus autem transiens per medium illorum ibat*; that is to seyne, *Jesus forsothe passynge be the myddes of hem he wente*; in tokene and mynde that oure Lord passed thorghe out the Jewes crueltee, and scaped safely fro hem; *so surely moewe men passen the perile of thefes*." See also *Catal. mss. Harl.* n. 2966. It must be owned that a spell against thieves was the most serviceable, if not the most elegant, inscription that could be put upon gold coin.---Ashmole, in his *Theatrum Chemicum*, p. 43, has repeated this ridiculous story concerning Lully, with

make it felonie *to multiplie gold or silver, or to use the art of multiplication.*

§ 39. In the *Prologue to The Manciple's Tale* the pilgrims are supposed to be arrived at a little town called *Bob-up-and-down, Under-the-Blee, in Canterbury-way*. I cannot find a town of that name in any map; but it must have lain between Boughton (the place last mentioned) and Canterbury. The fable of the Crow, which is the subject of *The Manciple's Tale*, has been related by so many authors, from Ovid down to Gower, that it is impossible to say whom Chaucer principally followed. His skill in new-dressing an old story was never perhaps more successfully exerted.

additional circumstances, as if he really believed it; though Lully, by the best accounts, had been dead above twenty years before Edward III. began to coin gold.---The same author (*Mercuriophilus Anglicus*, as he styles himself) has inserted among his *Hermetique Mysteries* [p. 213] an old English poem under the title of *Hermes Bird*, which (he says in his Notes, p. 467) was thought to have been written originally by Raymund Lully, or at least made English by Cremer [*Abbot of Westminster, and scholar to Lully*, p. 465]. The truth is, that the poem is one of Lydgate's, and had been printed by Caxton under its true title, *The Chorle and the Bird*; and the fable on which it is built is related by Petrus Alphonsus [*de Clericali Disciplinâ*, mss. Reg. 10 B. xii.], who lived above two hundred years before Lully.

§ 40. After the Tale of the Manciple, the common editions, since 1542 (32), place what is called
The

(32) In the edition of 1542, when The Plowman's Tale was first printed, it was placed *after* The Person's Tale. The editor, whoever he was, had not assurance enough (it should seem) to thrust it into the body of the Work. In the subsequent editions however, as it had probably been well received by the publick, upon account of its violent invectives against the church of Rome, it was advanced to a more honourable station, next to The Manciple's Tale, and *before* The Person's. The only account which we have of any ms. of this Tale is from Mr. Speght, who says [Note prefixed to Plowman's Tale] that he had "seene it in written hand in John Stowe's librarie in a booke of such antiquitie as seemed to have been written neare to Chaucer's time." He does not say that it was *among The Canterbury Tales*, or that it had *Chaucer's name* to it. We can therefore only judge of it by the internal evidence, and upon that I have no scruple to declare my own opinion, that it has not the least resemblance to Chaucer's manner either of writing or thinking in his other Works. Though he and Boccace have laughed at some of the abuses of religion, and the disorders of ecclesiastical persons, it is quite incredible that either of them, or even Wickliff him self, would have railed at the whole government of the church in the style of this Plowman's Tale. If they had been disposed to such an attempt, their times would not have borne it. But it is probable that Chaucer (though he has been pressed into the service of Protestantism by some zealous writers) was as good a Catholick as men of his understanding and rank in life have generally been. The necessity of auricular confession, one of the great scandals of Popery, cannot be more strongly inculcated than it is in the following Tale of the Person,-----I will just observe that Spenser seems to speak of the

The Plowman's Tale : but as I cannot understand that there is the least ground of evidence, either external or internal, for believing it to be a work of Chaucer's, I have not admitted it into this edition.

§ 41. *The Persone's Prologue* therefore is here placed next to *The Manciple's Tale*, agreeably to all the mss. which are known, and to every edition before 1542. In this Prologue, which introduces the last Tale upon the journey to Canterbury, Chaucer has again pointed out to us the time of the day: but the hour by the clock is very differently represented in the mss. In some it is *ten*, in others *two*, in most of the best mss. *four*, and in one *five*. Ac-

author of *The Plowman's Tale* as a distinct person from Chaucer, though (in compliance I suppose with the taste of his age) he puts them both on the same footing. In the epilogue to *The Shepherd's Calendar*, he says to his book---

Dare not to match thy pipe with *Tityrus* his stile,
Nor with the Pilgrim that *the Ploughman* plaid awhile.

I know that Mr. Warton (in his excellent *Observations on Spenser*, v. i. p. 125) supposes this passage to refer to the *Visions of Pierce Ploughman*: but my reason for differing from him is, that the author of the *Visions* never, as I remember, speaks of himself in the character of a Ploughman.-----Of the Pilgrim's Tale, which has also, with as little foundation, been attributed to Chaucer [*Speght's Life of Chaucer*], I shall speak in another place.

cording

cording to the phænomena here mentioned, the sun being 29° high, and the length of the shadow to the projecting body as 11 to 6, it was *between four and five*. As by this reckoning there were at least three hours left to sunset, one does not well see with what propriety the Host admonishes the Person to *haste him*, because *the sonne wol adoun*, and to be *fructuous in litel space*; and indeed the Person (knowing probably how much time he had good) seems to have paid not the least regard to his admonition; for his Tale (if it may be so called) is twice as long as any of the others. It is entitled in some mss. *Traētatus de Pœnitentiâ, pro Fabulâ, ut dicitur, Rectoris*; and I much suspect that it is a translation of some such treatise. I cannot recommend it as a very entertaining or edifying performance at this day: but the reader will be pleased to remember, in excuse both of Chaucer and his editor, that, considering The Canterbury Tales as a great picture of life and manners, the piece would not have been complete, if it had not included the religion of the time.

§ 42. What is commonly called *The Retraction*, at the end of The Person's Tale, in several mss. makes part of that Tale; and certainly the appellation of *Litel Tretise* suits better with a single Tale

than with such a voluminous work as the whole body of Canterbury Tales : but then, on the other hand, the recital which is made in one part of it of several compositions of Chaucer, could properly be made by nobody but himself. I have printed it as I found it in *ms.* *Ask.* i. with a few corrections from other *mss.* and in the notes I shall give the best account that I can of it.

Having thus gone through the several parts of The Canterbury Tales which are printed in this edition, it may not be improper, in the conclusion of this Discourse, to state shortly the parts which are wanting to complete the journey to Canterbury. Of the rest of Chaucer's intended plan (as has been said before) we have nothing. Supposing therefore the number of the pilgrims to have been *twenty-nine* [see before, § 6], and allowing the Tale of the Chanone's Yeman to stand in the place of that which we had a right to expect from the Knight's Yeman, the Tales wanting will be only those of the *five* City-mechanicks and the Ploughman. It is not likely that the Tales told by such characters would have been among the most valuable of the set ; but they might, and probably would, have served to link together those which at present are unconnected ; and for that reason it is
much

much to be regretted that they either have been lost, or (as I rather believe) were never finished by the Author (33).

(33) When we recollect that Chaucer's papers must in all probability have fallen into the hands of his son Thomas, who at the time of his father's death was of such age and discretion as to be made Speaker of the House of Commons in the very next year, we can hardly doubt that all proper care was taken of them; and if the Tales in question had ever been inserted among the others, it is scarce conceivable that they should all have slipped out of all the copies of this Work, of which we have any knowledge or information. Nor is there any sufficient ground for imagining that so many Tales could have been suppressed by design, though such a supposition may perhaps be admitted to account for the loss of some smaller passages. See above, n. 8.

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CANTERBURY TALES.

THE PROLOGUE.

WHEN April, soft'ning, sheds refreshing show'rs,
And frees from droughty March the springing flow'rs;
April! that bathes the teeming womb of earth,
And gives to vegetation kindly birth:

When Zephyr breathes the gale that favours love,
And cherishes the growth of ev'ry grove;
Zephyr! that ministers, with genial breeze,
Bloom to the shrubs, and verdure to the trees:

When youthful Phœbus half his course completes,
Divides the Ram, and glows with temp'rate heats;
Phœbus! our equal good, the live-long year,
Or should he take, or should he quit the sphere:

When Philomel enjoys the coming Spring,
And, feeling her approach, delights to sing;
Sweet Philomel! of all the birds that fly,
The sole to pass the night with sleepless eye:

Then

Then pilgrims long to roam to foreign lands ;
Then palmers pass, with branches in their hands ;
Then various vot'ries visit various climes ;
Then sundry saints are fee'd for sundry crimes.

But not abroad our English zealots stroll ;
To Canterbury tend the pious shoal.
There pay, and promise to the saint inshrin'd,
For ev'ry ail of body, and of mind.

It so befell, that season, on a day,
In Southwark, at the Tabarde-Inn, I lay ;
Ready by morn my progress to pursue :
A pilgrimage to see, was all my view.

When at our inn, before the fall of night,
Lo ! twenty-nine in fellowship alight :
Strangers, that chanc'd in company to fall ;
Unlike the men, but pilgrims they were all.

To Canterbury each propos'd to ride —
The house was roomy, and the stables wide :
Well serv'd was ev'ry beast, and ev'ry guest,
And man and horse were treated with the best.

I talk'd with each, with each familiar grew,
Was one with all before the sun withdrew :
And one and all agreed, at dawn of day,
To Canterbury town to take their way.

But

But here it falls in season and in place,
That company with play keep pace with pace.
Then, ere we fally, take, as I describe,
The characters of all our pilgrim-tribe ;
Just what they were, or what they seem'd to me,
Their age or sex, their fashion, or degree,
In what array, or what condition in :
This granted ; with the Knight I first begin.

CHARAC-

CHARACTERS

OF THE

PILGRIMS.

THE KNIGHT.

A Knight there was, whose early youth had shown
His love to arms, and passion for renown.
Courteous and affable, of honour nice,
A friend to truth, a foe to ev'ry vice.
In many brave engagements had he been,
Known foreign courts, and men and manners seen.
In Christendom much fame he had acquir'd;
In Turkey he was dreaded and admir'd.
When Alexandria was besieg'd and won,
He pass'd the trenches first, and scal'd the town.
Granada's siege increas'd the warrior's fame,
And Algier trembled but to hear his name:
In fifteen battles deathless wreaths he got,
Three single combats with success he fought.

Much

Much ground he travell'd o'er, for he had seen
Our Saviour's sepulchre in Palestine.
The barb'rous Infidels had felt his might ;
Fierce in engagement, gentle after fight.
In council and in conduct, wise and stay'd ;
In conversation, modest as a maid ;
Plain and sincere, observant of the right ;
In mien and manners, an accomplish'd knight.
A goodly horse he rode, well shap'd and strong,
No gaudy saddle, nor no trappings long.
The arms he wore were bright, and free from stain ;
His habit serviceable, neat and plain :
With grateful zeal, devoutly he was come
To thank the saint, that brought him safely home.

THE SQUIRE.

WITH him his son, a sprightly Squire, and gay;
Youthful and blooming as the month of May;
A fearless lover, in a courtly dress,
With curling locks, just taken from the press.
Of twenty years he seem'd, well shap'd and tall,
Strong was his make, his port majestic.
The army did his early courage see
In Flanders, and in fertile Picardy.
He hop'd his valour would all forms remove,
And plead successfully its master's love.
His vest with various colours did abound,
Like flow'ry meads, when spring adorns the ground.
Short was his coat, the sleeves were long and wide;
Well could he sing, and treats and balls provide.
His fiery steed he gracefully would sit;
Love-songs he made, not wholly void of wit.
Some skill in painting too the youth had shown,
Could draw a mistress, or design a town;
Love o'er his gentle heart did so prevail,
He slept as little as the nightingale.

THE SQUIRE'S YEOMAN.

THIS Squire a Yeoman had, and only him,
Whose truth and diligence deserv'd esteem :
Girt with a belt, his garment was of green ;
A quiver, stor'd with arrows bright and keen,
Hung cross his shoulders in a filken string,
The feathers borrow'd from the peacock's wing.
At his left side a weighty sword he wore,
And on his arm a well-tried buckler bore :
A dagger, short and broad, was tied below ;
His strong right hand sustain'd a mighty bow.
A Christopher his bosom did adorn,
In a fair baldrick hung his silver horn.
His sun-burnt visage, and his grass-green hood,
Might prove him well a ranger of the wood.

THE PRIORESS.

THERE was with these a Nun, a Prioress,
A lady of no ord'nary address.
Her smiles were harmless, and her look was coy;
She never swore an oath, but by St. Loye;
Known by the name of lady Eglantine—
She sung the office with a grace divine.
She spoke the French of Stratford-School, by Bow;
The French of Paris she did never know.
The French of Paris did to her appear
Strange as our Law-French to a Frenchman's ear.
At meals she sat demure, carv'd neat, and well,
No morsel from her lips unseemly fell.
She never dipp'd her finger in the mess,
Nor with one drop defil'd her holy dress:
With a becoming grace and smiling eye,
She gain'd respect from all the company;
Easy and free, still pleasant at her meat,
And held it no small pain to counterfeit.
She hated stateliness, yet wisely knew
What fit regard was to her title due.
She pity'd ev'ry creature in distress,
Devout, and charitable to excess;

Her

Her tender heart with such compassion fill'd,
She'd weep to see a poor mouse caught and kill'd.
Her lap-dogs still with her fair hand she fed,
With milk, and roast-meat, mixt with crumbs of bread:
In her own chamber, on her bed they slept;
If any died, most bitterly she wept.
Well set her wimple, nicely pinch'd it was;
Her nose was straight, her eyes were grey as glass.
Small was her mouth, her lips were red and soft;
A beauteous forehead always borne aloft;
Broad, smooth and shining eye-brows, neat and small,
A slender waist, inclining to be tall.
A curious garment, wondrous neat, she wore;
A pair of beads, with green enamell'd o'er,
Of shining coral, did her arm infold,
Grac'd with an ornament of beaten gold.
Upon it was engrav'd a circling wreath,
And * *amor vincit omnia* writ beneath.
A Nun, who seldom from her sight did stir,
Her chaplain, and three Priests attended her.

* Love subdueth all things.

THE MONK.

NEXT these a merry Monk appears in place,
Who follow'd hunting more than saying mass.
As bravely mounted as a lord from court ;
No well-fed abbot bore a comelier port :
And when in state he ambled, all might hear
The jingling of his bridle, loud and clear,
As far almost as any chapel bell.
This lordly monk, once keeper of a cell,
Held good St. Bennet's order too severe ;
St Maure to his nice judgment did appear
Too strict and rigid, for old dotards fit,
But scorn'd by priests of spirit and of wit.
One scripture-text he blotted with his pen,
That says, all hunters are ungodly men.
What shoals of converts would this doctrine raise !
Shall monks in study pass laborious days ?
Turn o'er dull fathers, and worm-eaten books,
With dazzled eyes, and melancholy looks ;
Toil with their hands to make the garden neat,
Turn cooks, and baste the roast with their own sweat ?
This Austin humbly did ; Did he ? (saith he)
Austin may do the same again for me.

He

He lov'd the chace, the hounds' melodious cry,
Hounds that ran swiftly as the swallows fly.
His sleeves, I saw, with furs all lin'd within,
From Russia brought, the finest squirrels skin;
(Hair shirts, he said, provok'd the blood to sin.)
His hood beneath, his double chin to hold,
'Twas fasten'd with a curious clasp of gold.
A love-knot at the greater end there was;
His head close shav'd, and smooth as any glass:
His strutting paunch was seldom disappointed;
His broad full face shone as it were anointed.
His eyes were sleepy, rolling in his head,
That steam'd like furnaces of molten lead.
Supple his boots, his horse he proudly sate;
You'd take him for a bishop by his state:
Fasts had not made him meagre like a ghost,
But fat he was, and goodly as mine host.
A fat plump swan he lov'd, young, but full grown;
His horse was sleek, and as the berry brown.

THE FRYAR.

A Fryar next, to ev'ry female dear,
All the four orders never had his peer.
Wanton, diverting still in prose or rhyme,
He many couples married in his time ;
Some young ones at his own expence he wed,
And, to their husbands' grief, soon brought to bed.
A frank companion, secret, often tried,
To gentle dames a confessor and guide ;
Licentiate of his order once, and then,
For one the curate had, he shrifted ten :
He with a smile would their confession hear,
No soul had cause his penances to fear.
His absolutions pleasant, soft and mild ;
He stroak'd 'em as a parent does his child.
To a poor order lib'ral ladies fly,
With golden presents easy penance buy :
For man is obstinate, and hard of heart ;
He keeps his money, though he feels the smart.
But to poor Fryars you must silver give,
'Tis not with pray'rs and fasting they can live.
He stich'd within his tippet pretty knives,
With silver pins, small presents for kind wives.

In cheerful company he sung all day ;
To help his voice, could on the cittern play :
His arms were brawny, few such weights could fling,
Strong as a champion for an English king.
All inns and taverns in the town he knew,
But from the poor he prudently withdrew ;
To rich and lib'ral penitents inclin'd,
To those was meek, and of an humble mind ;
None in appearance more devout could be,
The ablest beggar of his house was he :
He farm'd that income, and procur'd a grant,
No holy brother should disturb his haunt.
Coarse was his habit when a begging Fryar,
In wanton love-days gorgeous his attire.
Of finest cloth was then his demi-cope,
No mendicant, but stately as a pope.
Something he humm'd betwixt a lisp and song,
To make his English sweet upon his tongue ;
His little pigs-eyes gave unequal light,
Like small stars twinkling in a frosty night.
The good wives chuckled, wherefoe'er he came,
A useful Fry'r, and Hubert was his name.

THE MERCHANT.

WITH these a merchant in a motley coat,
Well mounted too, and bearded like a goat;
A Flanders beaver on his head he wore;
His boots were neatly buckled on before:
He prov'd with reasons strong, and formal face,
T' increase in wealth was to increase in grace;
Greedy of gold, and popular esteem,
He wish'd the sea were shut to all but him.
Traffick in money he had study'd well,
Knew where th' exchange would rise, and where it fell:
In debt to none, in bargains strict and nice;
Thought unprompt payment was the greatest vice.
What he with pains had got, with care he'd save,
Not charitable, for he seldom gave.

THE

CLERK OR SCHOLAR OF OXFORD.

A Clerk of Oxford next appear'd in sight,
Who spent on logic many a day and night.
Lank as a rake, the steed on which he sat;
And, sooth to say, the man was nothing fat.
Of aspect sober, as of body lean;
Effect of contemplation more than spleen.
Hollow his vest, and thread-bare was his coat,
A youth of worth he look'd, though not of note.
For he nor benefice had got, nor cure,
No patron yet so worldly to insure!
So dextrous yet, of body, or of face,
To circumvent no chaplain with his grace:
Nor fulsome dedication could he write;
Drudge for a dame, or pander for a knight!
Much rather had he range, beside his bed,
A score of authors unadorn'd in red,
With Aristotle, champion of the schools;
To mend his ways, by philosophic rules;
Than basely to a vic'rage owe his rise,
By courting folly, or by flatt'ring vice;

Than

Than flourish like a prebend in his stall :
That way, he held, was not to rise, but fall.
Nor would he be the man, for all his rent,
Nam'd you the priest of Bray, or priest of Trent!

One search of science he forgot alone;
An useful search ! the philosophic stone !
Hence, tho' his head much learned wealth might hold;
Yet held he in his coffer little gold;
And late that stock a foreign journey drain'd,
Curious to see what yet of Rome remain'd.
Not to the dead that he confin'd his looks;
The living he could read, and men with books:
Yet most on books, what he acquires, he spends,
From care of parents, or from love of friends !
And these, unbound, or bound, his chambers strow,
A choice collection, bought for use, not show !
There oft in secret pray'd the grateful youth,
For those that put him in the way of truth ;
That gave the means, just precepts to instil,
Or taught him to distinguish good from ill.
Thus grounded well, he study'd to proceed,
And not a word spoke more than there was need :
'Twas short or close, sententious or sublime,
And urg'd with modesty, and said in time.

For to instruct he rather wish'd, than strove,
Willing to be improv'd, or to improve !
Still turn'd to moral virtue was his speech,
And gladly would he learn, and gladly teach.

THE MAN OF LAW, &c.

A Serjeant of the law, discreet, precise,
Well could he plead at bar, and well advise;
Wealthy he was, but frugal of expence,
And his sage look demanded reverence.
Weighty his arguments, his words were wise;
Oft he had sat as judge at an assize:
There by commission rais'd to high degree,
Maturely weigh'd out justice equally.
Robes for the bench he had, and for the bar;
No serjeant was a greater purchaser;
If safe the title, moderate the price,
A good fee-simple never came amiss.
He for a very busy man did pass,
And yet he seem'd much busier than he was.
Whole shoals of clients in the term he had;
And law enough to make those clients mad.
All his conveyances were legal, true;
No flaw was found in any thing he drew.
The statutes of the land he had by heart,
Turn'd all to gold without the chymist's art.
In a plain motley coat he rode, tied fast
With a strip'd silken sash about his waist.

THE

THE FRANKLIN,
OR, COUNTRY GENTLEMAN.

A Franklin was the Serjeant's chief delight ;
His beard was long, and as the daisy white.
Sanguine he was, and study'd pleasure most ;
His morning's draught, sack with a nut-brown toast.
All delicates, that money could procure,
He had ; a nice luxurious epicure.
With fish and fowl, with bak'd meat and with roast,
His table groan'd ; he valu'd not the cost.
All rarities the nation could afford
Were search'd, and bought to fill his ample board.
In ev'ry season delicates appear,
Diversify'd each quarter of the year.
Hare, partridge, pheasant, ever were at hand,
Carp, tench, and bream, as ready at command ;
With poignant sauces proper for each dish :
Woe to the cook, were any thing amiss.
Spacious his hall, and open was the door,
Fragments and marrow-bones bespread the floor ;
And, ready cover'd with all sorts of food,
All the long day a table dormant stood.

This

This worthy Franklin bore a purse of filk,
Fixt to his girdle, white as morning milk.
Knight of the shire ; first justice at th' assize,
To help the poor, the doubtful to advise.
In all employments, gen'rous, just he prov'd,
Renown'd for courtesy, by all belov'd.

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THE
HABERDASHER, WEAVER, CARPENTER,
DYER, TAP'STRY-MERCHANT.

AN Haberdasher next, a portly wight ;
Sleek was his beaver, as a sberiff's white ;
A Weaver follow'd, dextrous to command
The sliding shuttle, thrown from hand to hand ;
A Carpenter, that well could play his part
Thro' all the weapons of the plaining art ;
A Dyer, that ev'ry colour knew to stain,
Or change anew, though ne'er so deep in grain ;
A Tap'stry-Merchant last, whose web might pass
Less for the work of London, than Aras :
All of a livery, each for other made,
All solemn brothers, diff'ring but in trade ;
One stamp of mind their very forms express'd,
Same shap'd, like fac'd, like manner'd, and same drest.
Fresh were their clothes, nor bought at trivial cost,
So fresh, no part its Christmas gloss had lost.
Worn only on the hours to feast or pray,
And dormant ev'ry common-letter'd day.

No

No vulgar daggers, vamp'd with brass, they wore,
But trimm'd with silver of the finest ore.
With silver stitch'd the pouches by their side,
The belts, that gird their loins, with silver tied.
A fair and ample burghers, one and all,
And fit to fill the tables of Guildhall;
Or when they meet to traffic, or to feast:
For each was siz'd an alderman at least.
Staunch stood their city-shops in good repair,
And neat their boxes built for country air;
Where still, to breathe, on Saturdays they went;
For large their stock in trade, as well as rent:
Of which their wives were not a little proud,
And push'd the foremost in the Sunday crowd.
Nor would we here their worldly wisdom blame;
Respect from all superior riches claim;
And though an aukward, 'tis a pleasant sight,
To see the bustling dame assert her right;
Full of the money torn from the distressed,
Conceit herself a thing above the rest.
Madam! my lady! seems a glorious sound!
When loftily she moves, to vigils bound;
With mantle borne before, and train behind:
For wealth gives pow'r of face, and pride of mind.

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THE COOK.

WITH them, a trav'ling Cook they jointly led,
(For thriving cits are delicately fed)
Well skill'd in all the culinary toil,
The chick, just cackling in the shell, to boil ;
The cypress root to shred and press with art ;
To lay the custard, and to raise the tart ;
To powder marchant, ev'ry game to roast ;
To melt the marrow, and to brown the toast ;
To season and to lard ; to grill and fry ;
To pound the mortrey, and to bake the pie.
Great harm it was, (for much it slack'd his pace)
A mormal on his shin had taken place ;
And, forely griev'd, the blemish I descry'd :
But what his legs refus'd, his hands supply'd.
Of palate exquisite ; of labour free ;
A kitchen doctor in the first degree,
The food to cater, or the dish to fill ;
Blanc-mange was held his master-piece of skill.

THE SHIPMAN,

OR, SEAMAN, &c.

THEN came a Dartmouth Seaman far from west,
A very awkward rider at the best.
A coarse cloth gown he wore, not long, nor wide;
His dagger in a lace adorn'd his side.
He knew those sultry climates, where the sun
Turn'd his complexion to a dusky brown.
To company and mirth he did incline,
Had swallow'd many a draught of Bourdeaux wine;
Kept an obedient seaman's conscience,
Held borrowing from his owners no offence.
If 'twas his fate to take a lucky prize,
(For stoutly he would fight) he was so wise
To pick the best, which sent by parcels home,
Little of worth did to the office come.
A perfect master of the compass, he
Could shun each rock and shallow in the sea;
Had weather'd tempests, in engagements been,
'Scap'd many dangers, many countries seen;
Knew ev'ry creek and harbour on the main,
Of England, Scotland, and the coast of Spain.
In many fights his frigate much was fam'd,
The Magdalene of England it was nam'd.

THE

THE DOCTOR OF PHYSIC.

THE Doctor next ; a foe to all excess,
Who travell'd more for health than holiness.
In nice anatomy well skill'd was he,
And not a stranger to astronomy.
He knew to wire-draw a distemper well,
And cures by magic natural foretel :
A deep astrologer, and could with ease
Cast the nativity of each disease ;
Show at what punctual hour it should expire,
In terms which knaves invent, and fools admire.
The cause of every malady he knew,
Whether of cold, heat, moist, or dry it grew ;
Told which of those engender'd the disease,
'Twas but removing that, and you'd have ease.
Th' apothecary waited his command,
Drugs and electuaries were still at hand :
Whatever one prescrib'd, the other made,
And each by turns advanc'd the mutual trade.
He'd tell the wonders wrought by Phœbus' son,
What fame the great Hippocrates had won :
Well read in Galen, Celsus, Avicene,
In Dioscorides and Damascene.

M 2

These

These names, and many more, he had by rote,
Which to th' unlearn'd he never fail'd to quote.
No Bible on his pagan shelves had he,
It was prohibited the laity.
In diet singular ; young, tender meat,
And easy of digestion, he would eat.
At a rich patient's table, bold and free ;
But at his own, he prais'd frugality.
Of scarlet Persian filk his habit was,
And neatly lin'd with taffety, or gauze.
Great were his gains, but mod'rate his expence ;
He flourish'd in a time of pestilence.
Gold's the best cordial ; yet he lov'd to see
Coin'd *aurum*, rather than *potabile*.

THE WIFE OF BATH.

A Merry Wife of Bath comes next in place,
But somewhat deaf, with an autumnal face ;
By trade a weaver, one who scorn'd to grant
Her work out-done at Ypres, or at Gaunt.
No matron could with greater zeal incline
To pay her off'ring at the Martyr's shrine.
She neither patient, nor devout could be,
If any rival'd her in charity.
In her own parish she would take the wall,
Before the proudest matron of 'em all.
Upon a Sunday ever trimly drest,
She flaunted forth the envy of the rest :
Large were her kerchiefs, yet more gorgeous made
With her own work, and full three pound they weigh'd.
Scarlet her hose, her glossy shoes were new ;
Bold was her face, and ruddy was its hue.
Not one of her five husbands could be found ;
She lay'd 'em safe long since in holy ground.
With these she made a shift to pass her youth ;
Such was this good wife's constancy and truth !
She travell'd far, pass'd many a rapid stream ;
Thrice saw the reliques of Jerusalem :

Rome and the catacombs she knew full well ;
Strange things of Cologne and its kings could tell :
Spain she had travell'd o'er from end to end,
And good St. James was very much her friend.
Of various haps and perils by the way,
Much had she known, and yet much more would say.
Upon an ambling pad at ease she sat,
Jingling the bit, and slack'd her pace to chat.
A steeple hat she wore upon her head,
Whose ample brims were like a buckler spread ;
O'er her large hips a mantle fairly wrought
Before ; her kerchief to a point was brought ;
Like a rank rider, pointed spurs she wore ;
Of jests she had an unexhausted store :
Her talk did notably love's art advance,
For she had practis'd long that old new dance.

THE PARSON.

A Parish Priest was of the pilgrim-train,
 An awful, rev'rend, and religious man :
 His eyes diffus'd a venerable grace,
 And charity itself was in his face.
 Rich was his soul, th o' his attire was poor ;
 (As God had cloth'd his own ambassador)
 For such on earth his blest'd Redeemer bore.
 Of sixty years he seem'd ; and well might last
 To sixty more, but that he liv'd too fast ;
 Refin'd himself to soul, to curb the sense,
 And made almost a sin of abstinence.
 Yet had his aspect nothing of severe,
 But such a face as promis'd him sincere :
 Nothing reserv'd or fullen was to see ;
 But sweet regards, and pleasing sanctity :
 Mild was his accent, and his action free.
 With eloquence innate his tongue was arm'd ;
 Tho' harsh the precept, yet the preacher charm'd :
 For letting down the golden chain from high,
 He drew his audience upward to the sky :
 And oft with holy hymns he charm'd their ears :
 (A music more melodious than the spheres)

For David left him, when he went to rest,
 His lyre; and after him he sung the best.
 He bore his great commission in his look;
 But sweetly temper'd awe, and soften'd all he spoke.
 He preach'd the joys of heav'n, and pains of hell,
 And warn'd the sinner with becoming zeal; }
 But on eternal mercy lov'd to dwell.
 He taught the Gospel, rather than the Law;
 And forc'd himself to drive, but lov'd to draw:
 For fear but freezes minds; but love, like heat,
 Exhales the soul sublime to seek her native feat.
 To threats the stubborn sinner oft is hard;
 Wrapp'd in his crimes, against the storm prepar'd:
 But when the milder beams of mercy play,
 He melts, and throws his cumbrous cloak away.

Lightning and thunder (Heav'n's artillery)
 As harbingers before th' Almighty fly:
 Those but proclaim his stile, and disappear;
 The stiller sound succeeds, and God is there.

The tithes his parish freely paid, he took;
 But never su'd, or curs'd with bell and book:
 With patience bearing wrong, but off'ring none,
 Since ev'ry man is free to lose his own.

The

The country churls, according to their kind,
(Who grudge their dues, and love to be behind)
The less he sought his off'rings, pinch'd the more,
And prais'd a priest contented to be poor.

Yet of his little he had some to spare,
To feed the famish'd, and to clothe the bare:
For mortify'd he was to that degree,
A poorer than himself he would not see.
True priests, he said, and preachers of the word,
Were only stewards of their Sov'reign Lord;
Nothing was theirs, but all the public store;
Intrusted riches to relieve the poor;
Who, should they steal for want of his relief,
He judg'd himself accomplice with the thief.

Wide was his parish, not contracted close
In streets, but here and there a straggling house;
Yet still he was at hand, without request,
To serve the sick, or succour the distress'd;
Tempting on foot, alone, without affright,
The dangers of a dark tempestuous night.

All this the good old man perform'd alone,
Nor spar'd his pains, for curate he had none.
Nor durst he trust another with his care;
Nor rode himself to Paul's, the public fair,

To

To chaffer for preferment with his gold,
Where bishoprics and sinecures are sold:
But duly watch'd his flock by night and day,
And from the prowling wolf redeem'd the prey,
And hungry sent the wily fox away.

The proud he tam'd, the penitent he cheer'd;
Nor to rebuke the rich offender fear'd.
His preaching much, but more his practice wrought;
(A living sermon of the truths he taught)
For this, by rules severe his life he squar'd,
That all might see the doctrine which they heard:
For priests, he said, are patterns for the rest;
(The gold of heav'n, who bear the God impress'd)
But when the precious coin is kept unclean,
The Sov'reign's image is no longer seen.
If they be foul on whom the people trust,
Well may the baser brass contract a rust.

The prelate, for his holy life, he priz'd;
The worldly pomp of prelacy despis'd.
His Saviour came not with a gaudy show,
Nor was his kingdom of the world below.
Patience in want, and poverty of mind,
These marks of church and churchmen he design'd,
And living taught, and dying left behind.

The

The crown he wore was of the pointed thorn ;
In purple he was crucify'd, not born.

They who contend for place and high degree,
Are not his sons, but those of Zebedee.

Not but he knew the signs of earthly pow'r
Might well become Saint Peter's successor :
The holy Father holds a double reign ;
The prince may keep his pomp, the fisher must be plain.

Such was the Saint, who shone with ev'ry grace,
Reflecting, Moses-like, his Maker's face.
God saw his image lively was express'd ;
And his own work, as in creation, blest'd.

The Tempter saw him too, with envious eye ;
And, as on Job, demanded leave to try.

He took the time when Richard was depos'd,
And high and low with happy Harry clos'd.
This prince, though great in arms, the priest withstood.
Near though he was, yet not the next of blood.

Had Richard unconstrain'd resign'd the throne ;
A king can give no more than is his own :
The title stood entail'd, had Richard had a son.

}

Conquest, an odious name, was laid aside ;
Where all submitted, none the battle tried.

The

The senseless plea of right by providence
Was by a flatt'ring priest invented since,
And lasts no longer than the present sway,
But justifies the next who comes in play.

The people's right remains ; let those who dare,
Dispute their pow'r, when they the judges are.

He join'd not in their choice, because he knew
Worse might, and often did, from change ensue.
Much to himself he thought, but little spoke ;
And, undpriv'd, his benefice forsook.

Now through the land his cure of souls he stretch'd,
And like a primitive apostle preach'd ;
Still cheerful ; ever constant to his call ;
By many follow'd ; lov'd by most, admir'd by all.
With what he begg'd, his brethren he reliev'd ;
And gave the charities himself receiv'd.
Gave, while he taught, and edify'd the more,
Because he shew'd by proof 'twas easy to be poor.

He went not with the crowd to see a shrine ;
But fed us by the way with food divine.
In deference to his virtues, I might spare
To show you what the rest in orders were :
This brilliant is so spotless and so bright,
He needs no foil ; but shines by his own proper light.

THE

THE PLOWMAN, &c.

A Plowman follow'd, who had still at hand
Loads of manure t' enrich the grateful land;
An able, strong, laborious man was he,
Who liv'd with all in perfect charity:
He serv'd God faithfully, nor hoarded pelf,
But lov'd his neighbour equal with himself.
Hard would he work, and freely would he give;
And oft, for God's sake, did the poor relieve:
In dealing just, with losses not dismay'd;
In every kind his tithes he duly paid.
In a short coat he rode without a sleeve:
There was beside a Miller and a Reve,
A Sumner, and a Pardon-monger too,
A Steward, and myself, were all the crew.

THE MANCIPLE,
OR, TEMPLE-TREASURER.

A Steward of the Temple next must come,
A pattern for all caterers in town.
The price of every thing each market had
He knew, and nicely pick'd the good from bad.
Sometimes he went on trust, and sometimes paid,
Yet none could over-reach him in his trade.
Some wonder much, how an unletter'd man,
Of such low, fordid education, can
(Who is but one to more than three times ten)
O'er-reach so many grave, wise, learned men.
A practis'd lawyer all things understands:
Th' affairs of half the nation pass their hands.
We praise unjustly, partially condemn;
As they cheat others, others cozen them.
By various methods all professions live,
By their wise management he learn'd to thrive.
In life's long course such diff'rent ways we run,
Some to undo, but most to be undone.

THE SUMNER,

OR, APPARITOR.

THIS Sumner was not overstock'd with grace,
He had a bloated, broad, cherubic face,
Of fiery hue, with hollow eyes and narrow,
Red as a cock, and lech'rous as a sparrow:
Black were his eye-brows, bristled was his beard,
And much the children his stern visage fear'd.
His nose with carbuncles was overspread;
His cheeks with white welks on a ground of red.
No inward med'cine he could e'er procure
Had pow'r sufficient to effect their cure.
Not new quicksilver, with ceruse too,
Brimstone, nor oil of tartar, aught could do.
Strong bloody wine he lov'd, and well-dress'd fish,
And stunk of garlick like a Spanish dish.
When he was drunk, he'd talk a man to death,
And belch out Latin with unsav'ry breath.
Two or three common fragments he could say;
No wonder, for he heard it all the day.
But if you press'd him farther, you might see
A sudden end of his philosophy.

A lewd

A lewd young fellow, for a quart of wine,
Might for a twelvemonth have his concubine.
He taught his loose companions, in their sport,
T' evade the censure of th' archdeacon's court.
But if a rich libid'nous prize he found,
Him he inclos'd within his bawdy pound.
This, as no vulgar secret, he would tell,
A large full purse is the archdeacon's hell.
If rich men's souls within their purses lie,
'Tis just their sins be punish'd there, say I.
To him all wenches in the bishop's see
Paid public tribute, or a private fee.
Boldly he rode, a garland on his head,
Of all unmarried men and maids the dread.

THE PARDONER.

A Pardon-Monger last brought up the rear,
With patriarchal face and holy leer.
His hair was of the hue of yellow wax,
Straight and unequal as a striek of flax;
Yet long and thin it grew from his large head,
And all his brawny shoulders overspread;
Divided into parcels here and there:
No gaudy hood conceal'd his golden hair;
For that with care was in his wallet laid,
Where many curiosities he had.
Except a little cap, he rode all bare,
With glaring eyes, like a new-started hare:
A holy figure stich'd upon his cap;
His wallet hung before him on his lap,
Stuff'd and cramm'd full of pardons, newly come,
For greedy zealots, piping hot from Rome.
Shrill was his voice as any mountain goat;
Aloud he said his orisons by rote.
A beard he never had, nor e'er will have;
No barber took the pains that chin to shave.
He might have been a gelding or a mare;
But never sure, from Berwick e'en to Ware,

Was Pard'ner furnish'd with such precious geer :
 For in his male he had a pillow-bier,
 Which piously was thought our lady's veil :
 He kept beside a gobbet of the fail
 Which Peter had (and now this Pard'ner hath)
 When Christ rebuked him for little faith.
 A cross he shew'd of tin set full of stones,
 And in a glass a number of pigs bones.
 With these more pardons daily he'd dispense,
 In one poor village would collect more pence,
 (As by record too plainly does appear)
 Than a poor parson lab'ring all the year.
 Then, with feign'd flatteries and holy tools,
 He made the parson and the people fools.
 Howe'er, to tell the truth just as it stood,
 He seem'd in church ecclesiastic good.
 A lesson he could read, or tell a story,
 And roar the psalter with no little glory.
 But best of all, an offertory sung,
 So loud, so cheerful, that the chapel rung.
 This gain'd him pence from the deluded crowd,
 Therefore he sung so cheerful and so loud.

PROLOGUE

TO THE

KNIGHT'S TALE.

WHAT needs there more our pilgrims to describe,
 Our Southwark guests? a mix'd, but merry tribe:
 Their various looks and talents to display?
 Their sex and age? their number and array?
 Whom pious zeal, or fashionable course,
 Drew from their homes, here resting man and horse:
 Here well to rest, as trav'lers witness well;
 A friendly house; the Tabarde by the Bell.

And here it falls in order to recite,
 First, how in social cheer we pass'd the night:
 Next how, with common voice, and early day,
 Our troop to Canterbury took their way:
 And last the progress of our pilgrims tell,
 With each adventure duly as it fell.

But let me first your due indulgence claim,
 Lest this my freedom you unjustly blame;
 Where loose the subject, or where rude the speech:
 For we pretend to copy, not to teach.

Who tells another's tale, in verse or prose,
Nigh as he can should every word disclose;
For be it ne'er so wanton, or at large,
Such are the facts, and you must give the charge.
This rule infring'd (by law and reason known)
The tale is not another's, but your own.
All evidence is strict, all trial plain;
A witness should repeat, but never feign.
If new the conduct, or the language new,
The stamp re-touch'd, the coinage is untrue.
To this, whate'er the standard sense affords,
Requires exact similitude of words.
Apt words are shap'd fix'd objects to express,
For language is no more than nature's dress.
If some, that love's exalted colours wear,
Capriciously offend the virtuous ear;
Or heedlessly the virgin cheek inflame,
'Tis faulty modesty, mistaken shame.
If right the laws that free-born tongues enslave,
And force to veil what nature public gave,
Then nature err'd, deform'd the human frame
With parts dishonest, horrible to name!
But that great nature err'd, who dares pretend?
Why should the just description then offend?

Form'd

Form'd by the wisest plan each part is found,
And voice was giv'n to fit each part to sound.
Hence various words, by well-tun'd accents wrought,
Stamp on the ears the figures of the thought,
And fix the airy progress ere it flies,
As painting is the language of the eyes.
The skilful artist, lab'ring to display
The bright effulgence of meridian day,
With strongest colours strikes the burnish'd light,
The darker shades reserv'd for sullen night.
The poet thus that treats of am'rous wile,
Or wanton theft, must heighten all his style,
To raise warm passions, warm descriptions raise,
And keep for cooler sense the cooler phrase;
Nor arbitrary deem these stated rules,
The random doctrines of illib'ral schools:
The best philosophers like tenets hold,
Christian and heathen! both the new and old.
Read Plato; Plato says (if thou canst read)
"The word must be adapted to the deed:"
And oft full broad the phrase of holy writ;
Heathen and Christian must this truth admit.
Others perhaps, with happier talents blest,
Our breach of due decorum may contest:

In poems well dispos'd they may maintain,
Rank should be kept, as in a public train;
And none too forward, none too backward stand;
But band with due distinctions follow band.
"Nor rank, nor file, our rude militia mind,
"Some stray, 'tis true, before, and some behind."
If this excuse not, on the truth we rest,
"Low was our genius, and we did our best:
"And though a fault, (I speak without offence)
"Yet sure a venial fault, is want of sense."

But to return. Great joy our Host express'd,
Thrice heartily he welcom'd ev'ry guest;
And goodly cheer prepar'd with equal haste;
(He of two ills had rather pray than fast.)
Nor less the plague or comfort of his life,
Judge as ye list, his busy-stirring wife.
Anon was supper serv'd, and neatly drest,
In season ev'ry dish, and of the best.
Strong was the ale, with toast and nutmeg crown'd:
Pure was the wine; and both went briskly round.

Frank was our Host; a comely man withal,
A marshal fit for any noble hall;
Where many a graceless page is left in charge:
Round was his body, nor more round than large.

His

His sturdy legs, though slow, just measure keep :
A fairer burghers never trod the Cheap.
Though bold of speech, yet not more bold than wise ;
His wits awake, and watchful as his eyes :
Loud when he laugh'd, and hearty when he spoke :
His voice was mirth ; his very look a joke.

When now the rage of hunger was allay'd ;
And, what more joy'd our Host, our reck'ning paid,
" Thrice welcome (he began) both great and small !
" Bright lords and ladies fair ! thrice welcome all !
" Full many a noon has pass'd, full many a night,
" Since in this inn appear'd so brave a fight.
" A braver never with these eyes to see !
" Such guests ! so full of honour and of glee !
" Fain would I raise your mirth, had I but skill ;
" Or were my talent equal to my will.
" Yet let not the intent be wholly lost ;
" I mean not here to please you at your cost.
" To Canterbury early you proceed ;
" And may the blissful saint your wishes speed !
" But if the good and bad you justly weigh,
" Long must the road, and tedious seem the day ;
" For 'tis but dull to travel, you must own,
" Mute as a fish, and senseless as a stone.

- " Be mine such luckless silence to prevent ;
 " Attend but my award with one consent.
 " For, by my father's body, long since dead,
 " Mirth you shall have, at forfeit of my head :
 " If none my wish too wilfully withstands,
 " In witness of your minds hold up your hands !"

Here waiting the event, he ceas'd to speak ;
 Our gen'ral counsel was not long to seek :
 For why should we reject his honest suit,
 The purport far from worthy the dispute ?
 We vote the journey as he should advise ;
 In triivial things 'tis foolish to be wise.

- Then thus our Host his speech renew'd again :
 " The point, ye nobles, take not in disdain.
 " The road to shorten, and deceive the day,
 " (For mirth makes mirth, and play gives rise to play)
 " I will, that each by turns two stories tell,
 " Of strange adventures which of old befel :
 " One ere you reach Saint Thomas' sacred shrine ;
 " And one ere you regain the Tabarde sign.
 " Then farther be it solemnly agreed,
 " That he that in his place shall best succeed ;
 " Whose clofe is held most just, whose phrase most fit,
 " For profit or delight, for sense or wit ;

" His

" His be a supper at the common cost,
" Here, in this host'ry, sitting by this post.
" And more, to aid your sport, myself will ride,
" And be at once your governor and guide ;
" Content the shar'd expences to maintain;
" Not grudgingly : such company is gain.
" But first enact, that he that disobey's
" My will, the common charge, convicted, pays.
" This is my verdict. Ere we further go,
" Pass sentence, one and all; your aye, or no !"

Consent from one and all the question bore ;
And jointly, as our Host requir'd, we swore.
Nay more ; we vote him in the chair of state,
Sole umpire of the tales we should relate.
Submits in all to follow his advice,
We fix a supper at a stated price.
Pleas'd was our Host ; success improves design :
Pleas'd were the guests ; and loud they call'd for wine.
Smooth ev'ry brow, and easy every breast ;
Each took his cordial draught, and went to rest.

When scarce the blushing morn had streak'd the skies
With earliest day, our Host began to rise ;
And straight his guests he gather'd in a flock,
As stirs his common mates the feather'd cock.

Then

Then forth we fallied with an easy pace,
 Some low of spirits, sober most of face ;
 Till jointly to the sacred ford we came,
 Known, good Saint Thomas, by thy guardian name.
 There, at thy stream, to many a thirsty steed
 Free giv'n, our host forbade us to proceed ;
 And, silencing awhile his jingling bit,
 Arrests his horse ; all readily submit,
 And circle him around on ev'ry side ;
 When loud as any chanter thus he cry'd :

“ As morning song and ev'ning song agree,
 “ Both high and low attend to my decree ;
 “ Pay here such duty as by vote you pass'd,
 “ Then sweetly shall we chime from first to last.
 “ Be this the spot to cast the foremost tale ;
 “ And may these lips nor relish wine nor ale,
 “ (What more I dread, or dread not less than death ;
 “ For want of liquor is like want of breath)
 “ As he that dares against my will offend,
 “ Pays all, (for thus you swore) that all expend.
 “ Now chance decide, who loses, or who wins :
 “ Who draws the shortest lot, the first begins.
 “ Sir Knight, he said, my master and my lord,
 “ Draw forth—I mean your fortune, not your sword !

“ And

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“ And gentle dame, with one accord appear ;
“ Come near, my Lady Priorefs, come near !
“ And you, Sir Clerk, look up, take heart of grace ;
“ Put off that book-learn'd bashfulness of face :
“ And males and females, all alike lay hand : ”

And all alike submit to his command.

Suffice, that on the Knight the forfeit fell ;
Or were it chance, or fate, who knows may tell :
Nor know we, nor can tell ; yet, for the best,
Suppose it fortun'd. Glad were all the rest ;
As, though not freed, yet of their burthen eas'd :
Nor seem'd the noble Knight in look displeas'd,
Or griev'd in thought : the noble Knight was wise :
Whether concern he cover'd with disguise,
Or from experience had acquir'd content :
For care is vain, unless it can prevent.

“ If then by me the sport must be begun,
“ Thrice welcome lot (he said), not lost, but won !
“ Then ride and listen, to the crowd he cry'd ; ”

And at the word we listen as we ride :

While, nor with vulgar speech, nor gesture rude,
This tale of love and honour he pursu'd.

PALA-

PALAMON AND ARCITE:

OR, THE

KNIGHT's TALE.

IN days of old there liv'd, of mighty fame,
 A valiant prince, and Theseus was his name :
 A chief, who more in feats of arms excell'd,
 The rising nor the setting sun beheld :
 Of Athens he was lord ; much land he won,
 And added foreign countries to his crown :
 In Scythia with the warrior queen he strove,
 Whom first by force he conquer'd, then by love.
 He brought in triumph back the beauteous dame,
 With whom her sister, fair Emilia, came.
 With honour to his home let Theseus ride,
 With love to friend, and fortune for his guide,
 And his victorious army at his side.
 I pass their warlike pomp, their proud array,
 Their shouts, their songs, their welcome on the way :
 But were it not too long, I would recite
 The feats of Amazons, the fatal fight
 Betwixt the hardy Queen and hero Knight ;

The

The town besieg'd, and how much blood it cost
 The female army, and th' Athenian host;
 The spousals of Hippolyta the queen;
 What tilts and turneys at the feast were seen;
 The storm at their return, the ladies fear:
 But these, and other things, I must forbear.
 The field is spacious I design to sow,
 With oxen far unfit to draw the plough:
 The remnant of my tale is of a length
 To tire your patience, and to waste my strength;
 And trivial accidents shall be forborne,
 That others may have time to take their turn;
 As was at first enjoin'd us by mine Host;
 That he whose tale is best, and pleases most,
 Should win his supper at our common cost.

And therefore, where I left I will pursue,
 This ancient story, whether false or true,
 In hope it may be mended with a new.
 The prince I mention'd, full of high renown,
 In this array drew near th' Athenian town;
 When in his pomp and utmost of his pride,
 Marching, he chanc'd to cast his eye aside,
 And saw a choir of mourning dames, who lay
 By two and two across the common way.

At

At his approach they rais'd a rueful cry,
And beat their breasts, and held their hands on high;
Creeping and crying, till they seiz'd at last
His courser's bridle, and his feet embrac'd.

“ Tell me, said Theseus, what and whence you are,
“ And why this fun'ral pageant you prepare?
“ Is this the welcome of my worthy deeds,
“ To meet my triumph in ill-omen'd weeds?
“ Or envy you my praise, and would destroy
“ With grief my pleasures, and pollute my joy?
“ Or are you injur'd, and demand relief?
“ Name your request, and I will ease your grief.”

The most in years of all the mourning train
Began (but swooned first away for pain);
Then, scarce recover'd, spoke: “ Nor envy we
“ Thy great renown, nor grudge thy victory;
“ 'Tis thine, O King, th' afflicted to redress,
“ And fame has fill'd the world with thy success:
“ We wretched women sue for that alone,
“ Which of thy goodness is refus'd to none:
“ Let fall some drops of pity on our grief,
“ If what we beg be just, and we deserve relief:
“ For none of us, who now thy grace implore,
“ But held the rank of sovereign queen before;

“ Till,

‘ Till, thanks to giddy chance, which never bears,
‘ That mortal bliss should last for length of years,
‘ She cast us headlong from our high estate,
‘ And here in hope of thy return we wait ;
‘ And long have waited in the temple nigh,
‘ Built to the gracious goddess Clemency.
‘ But rev’rence thou the pow’r whose name it bears,
‘ Relieve th’ oppress’d, and wipe the widow’s tears.
‘ I, wretched I, have other fortune seen,
‘ The wife of Capaneus, and once a queen :
‘ At Thebes he fell ; curst be the fatal day !
‘ And all the rest thou seest in this array,
‘ To make their moan, their lords in battle lost
‘ Before that town, besieg’d by our confed’rate host :
‘ But Creon, old and impious, who commands
‘ The Theban city, and usurps the lands,
‘ Denies the rites of fun’ral fires to those
‘ Whose breathless bodies yet he calls his foes.
‘ Unburn’d, unbury’d, on a heap they lie ;
‘ Such is their fate, and such his tyranny :
‘ No friend has leave to bear away the dead,
‘ But with their lifeless limbs his hounds are fed.’
At this she shriek’d aloud ; the mournful train
Echo’d her grief, and grov’ling on the plain,

With

With groans, and hands upheld, to move his mind,
Besought his pity to their helpless kind.

The prince was touch'd, his tears began to flow,
And, as his tender heart would break in two,
He sigh'd ; and could not but their fate deplore,
So wretched now, so fortunate before.

Then lightly from his lofty steed he flew,
And raising one by one the suppliant crew,
To comfort each, full solemnly he swore,
That, by the faith which knights to knighthood bore,
And what e'er else to chivalry belongs,
He would not cease, till he reveng'd their wrongs :
That Greece should see perform'd what he declar'd ;
And cruel Creon find his just reward.

He said no more, but, shunning all delay,
Rode on ; nor enter'd Athens on his way :
But left his sister and his queen behind,
And wav'd his royal banner in the wind :
Where in an argent field the god of war
Was drawn triumphant on his iron car ;
Red was his sword and shield, and whole attire,
And all the godhead seem'd to glow with fire ;
Ev'n the ground glitter'd where the standard flew,
And the green grass was dy'd to sanguine hue.

High

High on his pointed lance his pennon bore
His Cretan fight, the conquer'd Minotaur :
The soldiers shout around with gen'rous rage,
And in that victory their own presage.
He prais'd their ardour ; inly pleas'd to see
His host the flow'r of Grecian chivalry.
All day he march'd ; and all th' ensuing night ;
And saw the city with returning light.
The process of the war I need not tell,
How Theseus conquer'd, and how Creon fell :
Or after, how by storm the walls were won,
Or how the victor sack'd and burn'd the town :
How to the ladies he restor'd again
The bodies of their lords in battle slain ;
And with what ancient rites they were interr'd :
All these to fitter time shall be deferr'd.
I spare the widows' tears, their woful cries,
And howling at their husbands' obsequies ;
How Theseus at these fun'rals did assist,
And with what gifts the mourning dames dismiss'd.
Thus when the victor chief had Creon slain,
And conquer'd Thebes, he pitch'd upon the plain
His mighty camp, and when the day return'd,
The country wasted, and the hamlets burn'd ;

And left the pillagers, to rapine bred,
Without controul to strip and spoil the dead.

There, in a heap of slain, among the rest,
Two youthful knights they found, beneath a load oppress'd
Of slaughter'd foes, whom first to death they sent,
The trophies of their strength, a bloody monument.
Both fair, and both of royal blood they seem'd,
Whom kinsmen to the crown the heralds deem'd:
That day in equal arms they fought for fame;
Their swords, their shields, their surcoats were the same.
Close by each other laid, they press'd the ground,
Their manly bosoms pierc'd with many a grievous wound;
Nor well alive, nor wholly dead they were,
But some faint signs of feeble life appear:
The wand'ring breath was on the wing to part,
Weak was the pulse, and hardly heav'd the heart.
These two were sister's sons; and Arcite one,
Much fam'd in fields, with valiant Palamon.
From these their costly arms the spoilers rent,
And softly both convey'd to Theseus' tent;
Whom known of Creon's line, and cur'd with care,
He to his city sent as pris'ners of the war,
Hopeless of ransom, and condemn'd to lie
In durance, doom'd a ling'ring death to die.

This

This done, he march'd away with warlike found,
And to his Athens turn'd, with laurels crown'd,
Where happy long he liv'd, much lov'd, and more re-
nown'd.

But in a tow'r, and never to be loos'd,
The woful captive kinsmen are inclos'd.

Thus year by year they pass, and day by day,
Till once ('twas on the morn of cheerful May)
The young Emilia, fairer to be seen
Than the fair lily on the flow'ry green,
More fresh than May herself in blossoms new,
(For with the rosy colour strove her hue)
Wak'd, as her custom was, before the day,
To do th' observance due to sprightly May:
For sprightly May commands our youth to keep
The vigils of her night, and breaks their sluggard sleep.
Each gentle breast with kindly warmth she moves;
Inspires new flames, revives extinguish'd loves.
In this remembrance Emily ere day
Arose, and dress'd herself in rich array,
Fresh as the month, and as the morning fair:
Adown her shoulders fell her length of hair:
A ribband did the braided tresses bind,
The rest was loose, and wanton'd in the wind.

Aurora had but newly chas'd the night,
And purpled o'er the sky with blushing light,
When to the garden-walk she took her way,
To sport and trip along in cool of day,
And offer maiden vows in honour of the May.

At ev'ry turn she made a little stand,
And thrust among the thorns her lily hand,
To draw the rose; and ev'ry rose she drew,
She shook the stalk, and brush'd away the dew:
Then party-colour'd flow'rs of white and red
She wove, to make a garland for her head:
This done, she sung and caroll'd out so clear,
That men and angels might rejoice to hear.
Ev'n wond'ring Philomel forgot to sing,
And learn'd from her to welcome in the spring.
The tow'r, of which before was mention made,
Within whose keep the captive knights were laid,
Built of a large extent, and strong withal,
Was one partition of the palace wall:
The garden was inclos'd within the square,
Where young Emilia took the morning air.

It happen'd Palamon, the pris'ner knight,
Restless for woe, arose before the light,
And with his gaoler's leave desir'd to breathe
An air more wholesome than the damps beneath.

This

This granted, to the tow'r he took his way,
Cheer'd with the promise of a glorious day ;
Then cast a languishing regard around,
And saw with hateful eyes the temples crown'd
With golden spires, and all the hostile ground. }
He sigh'd, and turn'd his eyes, because he knew,
'Twas but a larger gaol he had in view :
Then look'd below, and from the castle's height
Beheld a nearer and more pleasing sight :
The garden which before he had not seen, }
In spring's new livery clad of white and green,
Fresh flow'rs in wide parterres, and shady walks
between.

This view'd, but not enjoy'd, with arms across
He stood, reflecting on his country's loss ;
Himself an object of the public scorn,
And often wish'd he never had been born.
At last (for so his destiny requir'd),
With walking giddy, and with thinking tir'd,
He through a little window cast his sight,
Though thick of bars, that gave a scanty light ;
But ev'n that glimm'ring serv'd him to descry
Th' inevitable charms of Emily.

Scarce had he seen, but, seiz'd with sudden smart,
Stung to the quick, he felt it at his heart ;

Struck blind with overpow'ring light he stood,
Then started back amaz'd, and cry'd aloud.

Young Arcite heard ; and up he ran with haste,
To help his friend, and in his arms embrac'd ;
And ask'd him why he look'd so deadly wan,
And whence and how his change of cheer began ?
Or who had done th' offence ? “ But if, said he,
“ Your grief alone is hard captivity,
“ For love of Heav'n, with patience undergo
“ A cureless ill, since fate will have it so:
“ So stood our horoscope in chains to lie,
“ And Saturn in the dungeon of the sky,
“ Or other baleful aspect, rul'd our birth,
“ When all the friendly stars were under earth :
“ Whate'er betides, by destiny 'tis done ;
“ And better bear like men, than vainly seek to shun.”

‘ Nor of my bonds, said Palamon again,
‘ Nor of unhappy planets I complain :
‘ But when my mortal anguish caus'd my cry,
‘ That moment I was hurt through either eye ;
‘ Pierc'd with a random-shaft, I faint away,
‘ And perish with insensible decay :
‘ A glance of some new goddess gave the wound,
‘ Whom, like Actæon, unaware I found.

‘ Look

' Look how she walks along yon shady space ;
 ' Not Juno moves with more majestic grace ;
 ' And all the Cyprian queen is in her face. }
 ' If thou art Venus, (for thy charms confess
 ' That face was form'd in heav'n) nor art thou less,
 ' Disguis'd in habit, undisguis'd in shape ;
 ' O help us captives from our chains to 'scape !
 ' But if our doom be past in bonds to lie
 ' For life, and in a loathsome dungeon die,
 ' Then be thy wrath appeas'd with our disgrace,
 ' And show compassion to the Theban race,
 ' Oppress'd by tyrant pow'r !' While yet he spoke,
 Arcite on Emily had fix'd his look ;
 The fatal dart a ready passage found,
 And deep within his heart infix'd the wound :
 So that, if Palamon were wounded fore,
 Arcite was hurt as much as he, or more :
 Then from his inmost soul he sigh'd, and said,
 " The beauty I beheld has struck me dead :
 " Unknowingly she strikes, and kills by chance ;
 " Poison is in her eyes, and death in ev'ry glance.
 " O, I must ask ; nor ask alone, but move
 " Her mind to mercy, or must die for love."

Thus Arcite : and thus Palamon replies,
 (Eager his tone, and ardent were his eyes.)

- ‘ Speak’st thou in earnest, or in jesting vein?’
 “ Jestings, said Arcite, suits but ill with pain.”
 ‘ It suits far worse (said Palamon again,
 ‘ And bent his brows) with men who honour weigh,
 ‘ Their faith to break, their friendship to betray;
 ‘ But worst with thee, of noble lineage born,
 ‘ My kinsman, and in arms my brother sworn.
 ‘ Have we not plighted each our holy oath,
 ‘ That one should be the common good of both?
 ‘ One soul should both inspire, and neither prove
 ‘ His fellow’s hindrance in pursuit of love?
 ‘ To this before the gods we gave our hands,
 ‘ And nothing but our death can break the bands.
 ‘ This binds thee, then, to further my design;
 ‘ As I am bound by vow to further thine:
 ‘ Nor canst, nor dar’st thou, traitor, on the plain
 ‘ Appeach my honour, or thine own maintain,
 ‘ Since thou art of my council, and the friend
 ‘ Whose faith I trust, and on whose care depend:
 ‘ And wouldst thou court my lady’s love, which I
 ‘ Much rather than release, would choose to die?
 ‘ But thou, false Arcite, never shalt obtain
 ‘ Thy bad pretence; I told thee first my pain:
 ‘ For first my love began ere thine was born;
 ‘ Thou as my council, and my brother sworn,

‘ Art

‘ Art bound t’ assist my eldership of right,
‘ Or justly to be deem’d a perjur’d Knight.’

Thus Palamon: But Arcite with disdain
In haughty language thus reply’d again :
“ Forsworn thyself: the traitor’s odious name
“ I first return, and then disprove thy claim.
“ If love be passion, and that passion nurs’t
“ With strong desires, I lov’d the lady first.
“ Canst thou pretend desire, whom zeal inflam’d
“ To worship, and a pow’r celestial nam’d?
“ Thine was devotion to the blest above;
“ I saw the woman, and desir’d her love;
“ First own’d my passion, and to thee commend
“ Th’ important secret, as my chosen friend.
“ Suppose (which yet I grant not) thy desire
“ A moment elder than my rival fire;
“ Can chance of seeing first thy title prove?
“ And know’st thou not, no law is made for love?
“ Law is to things which to free choice relate;
“ Love is not in our choice, but in our fate;
“ Laws are but positive: love’s pow’r, we see,
“ Is nature’s sanction, and her first decree.
“ Each day we break the bond of human laws
“ For love, and vindicate the common cause.

“ Laws

- " Laws for defence of civil rights are plac'd ;
 " Love throws the fences down, and makes a gen'ral
 waste ;
 " Maids, widows, wives, without distinction fall ;
 " The sweeping deluge, love, comes on, and covers all.
 " If then the laws of friendship I trangress,
 " I keep the greater, while I break the less ;
 " And both are mad alike, since neither can possess ;
 " Both hopeless to be ransom'd, never more
 " To see the sun, but as he passes o'er.
 " Like Æsop's hounds contending for the bone,
 " Each pleaded right, and would be lord alone :
 " The fruitless fight continu'd all the day ;
 " A cur came by, and snatch'd the prize away.
 " As courtiers therefore juggle for a grant,
 " And, when they break their friendship, plead their want ;
 " So thou, if fortune will thy suit advance,
 " Love on ; nor envy me my equal chance :
 " For I must love, and am resolv'd to try
 " My fate, or failing in th' adventure die."

Great was their strife, which hourly was renew'd,
 Till each with mortal hate his rival view'd :
 Now friends no more, nor walking hand in hand ;
 But when they met, they made a furly stand ;

And

And glar'd like angry lions as they pass'd,
And wish'd that ev'ry look might be their last.

It chanc'd at length Pirithous came, t' attend
This worthy Theseus, his familiar friend :
Their love in early infancy began,
And rose as childhood ripen'd into man ;
Companions of the war ; and lov'd so well,
That when one dy'd, as ancient stories tell,
His fellow to redeem him went to hell. }

But to pursue my tale : to welcome home
His warlike brother is Pirithous come :
Arcite of Thebes was known in arms long since,
And honour'd by this young Thessalian prince.
Theseus, to gratify his friend and guest,
Who made our Arcite's freedom his request,
Restor'd to liberty the captive Knight,
But on these hard conditions I recite :
That if hereafter Arcite should be found
Within the compass of Athenian ground,
By day or night, or on whate'er pretence,
His head should pay the forfeit of th' offence.
To this Pirithous for his friend agreed,
And on his promise was the pris'ner freed.

Unpleas'd and pensive, hence he takes his way,
At his own peril ; for his life must pay.

Who

Who now but Arcite mourns his bitter fate,
Finds his dear purchase, and repents too late ?
“ What have I gain’d, he said, in prison pent,
“ If I but change my bonds for banishment ?
“ And banish’d from her sight, I suffer more
“ In freedom, than I felt in bonds before :
“ Forc’d from her presence, and condemn’d to live :
“ Unwelcome freedom, and unthank’d reprieve !
“ Heav’n is not, but where Emily abides ;
“ And where she’s absent, all is hell besides.
“ Next to my day of birth, was that accurs’d
“ Which bound my friendship to Pirithous first :
“ Had I not known that prince, I still had been
“ In bondage, and had still Emilia seen :
“ For though I never can her grace deserve,
“ ’Tis recompence enough to see and serve.
“ O Palamon, my kinsman and my friend,
“ How much more happy fates thy love attend !
“ Thine is th’ adventure, thine the victory :
“ Well has thy fortune turn’d the dice for thee :
“ Thou on that angel’s face may’st feed thy eyes ;
“ In prison ? no ; but blissful Paradise !
“ Thou daily seest that sun of beauty shine,
“ And lov’st at least in love’s extremest line.

“ I mourn

“ I mourn in absence love’s eternal night :
“ And who can tell, but since thou hast her sight,
“ And art a comely, young and valiant Knight,
“ Fortune (a various pow’r) may cease to frown,
“ And by some ways unknown thy wishes crown?
“ But I, the most forlorn of human kind,
“ Nor help can hope, nor remedy can find;
“ But doom’d to drag my loathsome life in care,
“ For my reward, must end it in despair.
“ Fire, water, air, and earth, and force of fates
“ That governs all, and heav’n that all creates,
“ Nor art, nor nature’s hand, can ease my grief;
“ Nothing but death, the wretch’s last relief:
“ Then farewell youth, and all the joys that dwell
“ With youth and life, and life itself farewell.
“ But why, alas ! do mortal men in vain
“ Of fortune, fate, or providence complain?
“ God gives us what he knows our wants require,
“ And better things than those which we desire :
“ Some pray for riches ; riches they obtain ;
“ But, watch’d by robbers, for their wealth are slain.
“ Some pray from prison to be freed ; and come,
“ When guilty of their vows, to fall at home ;
“ Murder’d by those they trusted with their life,
“ A favour’d servant, or a bosom wife.

“ Such

“ Such dear-bought blessings happen ev’ry day,
“ Because we know not for what things to pray.
“ Like drunken fots, about the street we roam :
“ Well knows the fot he has a certain home ;
“ Yet knows not how to find th’ uncertain place,
“ And blunders on, and staggers ev’ry pace.
“ Thus all seek happiness ; but few can find :
“ For far the greater part of men are blind.
“ This is my case, who thought our utmost good
“ Was in one word of freedom understood :
“ The fatal blessing came : from prison free,
“ I starve abroad, and lose the sight of Emily.”

Thus Arcite ; but if Arcite thus deplore
His suff’rings, Palamon yet suffers more :
For when he knew his rival freed and gone,
He swells with wrath ; he makes outrageous moan :
He frets, he fumes, he stares, he stamps the ground ;
The hollow tow’r with clamours rings around :
With briny tears he bath’d his fetter’d feet,
And dropp’d all o’er with agony of sweat.
‘ Alas ! he cried, I wretch in prison pine,
‘ Too happy rival, while the fruit is thine :
‘ Thou liv’st at large, thou draw’st thy native air,
‘ Pleas’d with thy freedom, proud of my despair :

‘ Thou

‘Thou may’st, since thou hast youth and courage join’d,
‘A sweet behaviour and a solid mind,
‘Assemble ours, and all the Theban race,
‘To vindicate on Athens thy disgrace :
‘And after (by some treaty made) possess
‘Fair Emily, the pledge of lasting peace :
‘So thine shall be the beauteous prize, while I
‘Must languish in despair, in prison die.
‘Thus all th’ advantage of the strife is thine ;
‘Thy portion double joys, and double sorrows mine.’

The rage of jealousy then fir’d his soul,
And his face kindled like a burning coal :
Now cold despair, succeeding in her stead,
To livid paleness turns the glowing red.
His blood, scarce liquid, creeps within his veins,
Like water which the freezing wind constrains.

Then thus he said : ‘Eternal deities,
‘Who rule the world with absolute decrees,
‘And write whatever time shall bring to pass,
‘With pens of adamant on plates of brass ;
‘What, is the race of human kind your care
‘Beyond what all his fellow-creatures are ?
‘He with the rest is liable to pain,
‘And like the sheep, his brother-beast, is slain.

‘Cold,

‘ Cold, hunger, prisons, ills without a cure,
‘ All these he must, and guiltless oft, endure :
‘ Or does your justice, pow’r, or prescience fail,
‘ When the good suffer, and the bad prevail ?
‘ What worse to wretched virtue could befall,
‘ If fate, or giddy fortune govern’d all ?
‘ Nay, worse than other beasts is our estate ;
‘ Them to pursue their pleasures you create ;
‘ We, bound by harder laws, must curb our will,
‘ And your commands, not our desires, fulfil ;
‘ Then, when the creature is unjustly slain,
‘ Yet, after death at least, he feels no pain ;
‘ But man, in life surcharg’d with woe before,
‘ Not freed when dead, is doom’d to suffer more.
‘ A serpent shoots his sting at unaware ;
‘ An ambush’d thief forelays a traveller ;
‘ The man lies murder’d, while the thief and snake,
‘ One gains the thickets, and one thrids the brake.
‘ This let divines decide ; but well I know,
‘ Just, or unjust, I have my share of woe,
‘ Through Saturn seated in a luckless place,
‘ And Juno’s wrath, that persecutes my race ;
‘ Or Mars and Venus in a quartil, move
‘ My pangs of jealousy for Arcite’s love.’

Let

Let Palamon oppress'd in bondage mourn,
While to his exil'd rival we return.

By this, the sun declining from his height
The day had shorten'd to prolong the night :
The lengthen'd night gave length of misery
Both to the captive lover and the free :
For Palamon in endless prison mourns ;
And Arcite forfeits life if he returns.
The banish'd never hopes his love to see ;
Nor hopes the captive lord his liberty.
'Tis hard to say who suffers greater pains :
One sees his love, but cannot break his chains ;
One freed, and all his actions uncontroll'd,
Beholds whate'er he would, but what he would behold.
Judge as you please, for I will haste to tell
What fortune to the banish'd Knight befel.

When Arcite was to Thebes return'd again,
The loss of her he lov'd renew'd his pain ;
What could be worse, than never more to see
His life, his soul, his charming Emily ?
He rav'd with all the madness of despair ;
He roar'd, he beat his breast, he tore his hair.
Dry sorrow in his stupid eyes appears ;
For wanting nourishment, he wanted tears :

His eye-balls in their hollow sockets sink ;
Bereft of sleep, he loaths his meat and drink :
He withers at his heart, and looks as wan
As the pale spectre of a murder'd man :
That pale turns yellow, and his face receives
The faded hue of sapless boxen leaves :
In solitary groves he makes his moan,
Walks early out, and ever is alone.
Nor mix'd in mirth, in youthful pleasure shares ;
But sighs when songs and instruments he hears :
His spirits are so low, his voice is drown'd ;
He hears as from afar, or in a swoon,
Like the deaf murmurs of a distant sound :
Uncomb'd his locks, and squalid his attire,
Unlike the trim of love and gay desire ;
But full of museful mopings, which presage
The loss of reason, and conclude in rage.

This when he had endur'd a year and more,
Now wholly chang'd from what he was before,
It happen'd once, that flumb'ring as he lay,
He dreamt (his dream began at break of day)
That Hermes o'er his head in air appear'd,
And with soft words his drooping spirits cheer'd :
His hat adorn'd with wings disclos'd the god,
And in his hand he bore the sleep-compelling rod:

Such

Such as he seem'd, when at his fire's command
On Argus' head he laid the snaky wand:
"Arise, he said, to conqu'ring Athens go,
"There fate appoints an end to all thy woe."
The fright awaken'd Arcite with a start,
Against his bosom bounc'd his heaving heart;
But soon he said, with scarce-recover'd breath,
"And thither will I go, to meet my death,
"Sure to be slain; but death is my desire,
"Since in Emilia's fight I shall expire."
By chance he spy'd a mirror while he spoke,
And gazing there, beheld his alter'd look;
Wond'ring, he saw his features and his hue
So much were chang'd, that scarce himself he knew.
A sudden thought then starting in his mind,
"Since I in Arcite cannot Arcite find,
"The world may search in vain with all their eyes,
"But never penetrate through this disguise.
"Thanks to the change which grief and sickness give;
"In low estate I may securely live,
"And see unknown my mistress day by day:"
He said; and cloth'd himself in coarse array;
A lab'ring hind in shew: then forth he went,
And to th' Athenian tow'rs his journey bent:

One squire attended in the same disguise,
Made conscious of his master's enterprize.
Arriv'd at Athens, soon he came to court,
Unknown, unquestion'd in that thick resort;
Proff'ring for hire his service at the gate,
To drudge, draw water, and to run or wait.

So far befel him, that for little gain
He serv'd at first Emilia's chamberlain;
And watchful all advantages to spy,
Was still at hand, and in his master's eye;
And, as his bones were big, and sinews strong,
Refus'd no toil that could to slaves belong;
But from deep wells with engines water drew,
And us'd his noble hands the wood to hew.
He pass'd a year at least attending thus
On Emily, and call'd Philostratus.
But never was there man of his degree
So much esteem'd, so well belov'd as he.
So gentle of condition was he known,
That through the court his courtesy was blown:
All think him worthy of a greater place,
And recommend him to the royal grace;
That exercis'd within a higher sphere,
His virtues more conspicuous might appear.

Thus

Thus by the gen'ral voice was Arcite prais'd,
And by great Theseus to high favour rais'd ;
Among his menial servants first enroll'd,
And largely entertain'd with sums of gold :
Besides what secretly from Thebes was sent,
Of his own income, and his annual rent.
This well employ'd, he purchas'd friends and fame ;
But cautiously conceal'd from whence it came.
Thus for three years he liv'd with large increase,
In arms of honour, and esteem in peace :
To Theseus' person he was ever near ;
And Theseus for his virtues held him dear.

While Arcite lives in bliss, the story turns
Where hopeless Palamon in prison mourns.
For six long years immur'd, the captive Knight
Had dragg'd his chains, and scarcely seen the light :
Lost liberty and love at once he bore ;
His prison pain'd him much, his passion more ;
Nor dares he hope his fetters to remove,
Nor ever wishes to be free from love.

But when the sixth revolving year was run,
And May within the twins receiv'd the sun,
Were it by chance, or forceful destiny,
Which forms in causes first whate'er shall be,

Assisted by a friend one moonless night,
 This Palamon from prison took his flight :
 A pleasant beverage he prepar'd before
 Of wine and honey mix'd, with added store
 Of opium ; to his keeper this he brought,
 Who swallow'd unaware the sleepy draught,
 And snor'd secure till morn ; his senses bound
 In slumber, and in long oblivion drown'd.
 Short was the night, and careful Palamon
 Sought the next covert ere the rising sun.
 A thick-spread forest near the city lay ;
 To this with lengthen'd strides he took his way,
 (For far he could not fly, and fear'd the day.)
 Safe from pursuit, he meant to shun the light,
 Till the brown shadows of the friendly night
 To Thebes might favour his intended flight.
 When to his country come, his next design
 Was all the Theban race in arms to join,
 And war on Theseus, till he lost his life,
 Or won the beauteous Emily to wife.

Thus while his thoughts the ling'ring day beguile,
 To gentle Arcite let us turn our stile ;
 Who little dreamt how nigh he was to care,
 Till treach'rous fortune caught him in the snare.

The

The morning-lark, the messenger of day,
Saluted in her song the morning grey;
And soon the sun arose with beams so bright,
That all th' horizon laugh'd to see the joyous sight:
He with his tepid rays the rose renews,
And licks the drooping leaves, and dries the dews;
When Arcite left his bed, resolv'd to pay
Observance to the month of merry May:
Forth on his fiery steed betimes he rode,
That scarcely prints the turf on which he trod:
At ease he seem'd, and prancing o'er the plains,
Turn'd only to the grove his horse's reins,
The grove I nam'd before; and lighting there,
A woodbine garland sought to crown his hair;
Then turn'd his face against the rising day,
And rais'd his voice to welcome in the May.
"For thee, sweet month, the groves green liv'ries wear;
"If not the first, the fairest of the year:
"For thee the Graces lead the dancing Hours,
"And Nature's ready pencil paints the flow'rs:
"When thy short reign is past, the ferv'rish sun
"The sultry tropic fears, and moves more slowly on.
"So may thy tender blossoms fear no blight,
"Nor goats with venom'd teeth thy tendrils bite,

"As thou shalt guide my wand'ring feet to find
 "The fragrant greens I seek, my brows to bind."

His vows address'd, within the grove he stray'd,
 Till fate, or fortune, near the place convey'd
 His steps, where secret Palamon was laid. }
 Full little thought of him the gentle Knight, }
 Who flying death had there conceal'd his flight, }
 In brakes and brambles hid, and shunning mortal fight. }
 And less he knew him for his hated foe;
 But fear'd him as a man he did not know.
 But as it has been said of ancient years,
 That fields are full of eyes, and woods have ears:
 For this the wise are ever on their guard,
 For unforeseen, they say, is unprepar'd.
 Uncautious Arcite thought himself alone,
 And less than all suspected Palamon,
 Who list'ning heard him, while he search'd the grove,
 And loudly sung his roundelay of love.
 But on the sudden stopp'd, and silent stood,
 (As lovers often muse, and change their mood)
 Now high as heav'n, and then as low as hell;
 Now up, now down, as buckets in a well:
 For Venus, like her day, will change her cheer,
 And seldom shall we see a Friday clear.

Thus

Thus Arcite having fung, with alter'd hue
Sunk on the ground, and from his bosom drew
A desp'rate sigh, accusing heav'n and fate,
And angry Juno's unrelenting hate.

"Curs'd be the day when first I did appear !

"Let it be blotted from the calendar,

"Left it pollute the month, and poison all the year. }

"Still will the jealous queen pursue our race ?

"Cadmus is dead, the Theban city was :

"Yet ceases not her hate : for all who come

"From Cadmus, are involv'd in Cadmus' doom.

"I suffer for my blood : unjust decree !

"That punishes another's crime on me.

"In mean estate I serve my mortal foe,

"The man who caus'd my country's overthrow.

"This is not all ; for Juno, to my shame,

"Has forc'd me to forsake my former name ; }

"Arcite I was, Philostratus I am.

"That fide of heaven is all my enemy :

"Mars ruin'd Thebes ; his mother ruin'd me.

"Of all the royal race remains but one

"Beside myself, th' unhappy Palamon,

"Whom Theseus holds in bonds, and will not free ;

"Without a crime, except his kin to me.

"Yet

“ Yet these, and all the rest I could endure :
“ But love’s a malady without a cure :
“ Fierce Love has pierc’d me with his fiery dart ;
“ He fries within, and hisses at my heart.
“ Your eyes, fair Emily, my fate pursue ;
“ I suffer for the rest, I die for you.
“ Of such a goddess no time leaves record,
“ Who burn’d the temple where she was ador’d :
“ And let it burn, I never will complain,
“ Pleas’d with my suff’rings, if you knew my pain.”

At this a sickly qualm his heart assail’d,
His ears ring inward, and his senses fail’d.
No word miss’d Palamon of all he spoke,
But soon to deadly pale he chang’d his look :
He trembled ev’ry limb, and felt a smart,
As if cold steel had glided through his heart ;
Nor longer staid, but starting from his place,
Discover’d stood, and show’d his hostile face :
‘ False traitor Arcite, traitor to thy blood,
‘ Bound by thy sacred oath to seek my good ;
‘ Now art thou found forsworn, for Emily ;
‘ And dar’st attempt her love, for whom I die.
‘ So hast thou cheated Theseus with a wile,
‘ Against thy vow, returning to beguile

‘ Under

‘Under a borrow’d name: as false to me,
‘So false thou art to him that set thee free.
‘But rest assur’d, that either thou shalt die,
‘Or else renounce thy claim in Emily.
‘For though unarm’d I am, and (freed by chance)
‘Am here without my sword, or pointed lance;
‘Hope not, base man, unquestion’d hence to go,
‘For I am Palamon, thy mortal foe.’

Arcite, who heard his tale, and knew the man,
His sword unsheath’d, and fiercely thus began:

“Now by the gods, who govern heav’n above,
“Wert thou not weak with hunger, mad with love,
“That word had been thy last, or in this grove
“This hand should force thee to renounce thy love.

“The surety which I gave thee, I defy:

“Fool, not to know that love endures no tie,

“And Jove but laughs at lovers’ perjury.

“Know, I will serve the fair in thy despite;

“But since thou art my kinsman, and a Knight,

“Here, have my faith, to-morrow in this grove

“Our arms shall plead the titles of our love:

“And heav’n so help my right, as I alone

“Will come, and keep the cause and quarrel both un-
known,

“With

“ With arms of proof both for myself and thee ;
“ Choose thou the best, and leave the worst to me.
“ And, that a better ease thou may’st abide,
“ Bedding and clothes I will this night provide,
“ And needful sustenance, that thou may’st be
“ A conquest better won, and worthy me.”

His promise Palamon accepts ; but pray’d,
To keep it better than the first he made.

Thus fair they parted till the morrow’s dawn,
For each had laid his plighted faith to pawn.

Oh Love ! thou sternly dost thy pow’r maintain,
And wilt not bear a rival in thy reign,
Tyrants and thou all fellowship disdain.

This was in Arcite prov’d, and Palamon ;
Both in despair, yet each would love alone.

Arcite return’d, and, as in honour ty’d,
His foe with bedding and with food supply’d ;
Then, ere the day, two suits of armour fought,
Which borne before him on his steed he brought :
Both were of shining steel, and wrought so pure,
As might the strokes of two such arms endure.
Now, at the time, and in th’ appointed place,
The challenger and challeng’d, face to face,
Approach ; each other from afar they knew,
And from afar their hatred chang’d their hue.

So

So stands the Thracian herdsman with his spear,
Full in the gap, and hopes the hunted bear,
And hears him rustling in the wood, and sees
His course at distance by the bending trees,
And thinks, Here comes my mortal enemy,
And either he must fall in fight, or I :

This while he thinks, he lifts aloft his dart ;
A gen'rous chilness seizes every part ;
The veins pour back the blood, and fortify the heart. }

Thus pale they meet ; their eyes with fury burn ;

None greets ; for none the greeting will return :

But in dumb furliness, each arm'd with care,

His foe profess, as brother of the war :

Then both, no moment lost, at once advance

Against each other, arm'd with sword and lance :

They lash, they foin, they pass, they strive to bore

Their corslets, and the thinnest parts explore.

Thus two long hours in equal arms they stood,

And wounded, wound ; till both were bath'd in blood ;

And not a foot of ground had either got,

As if the world depended on the spot.

Fell Arcite like an angry tiger far'd,

And like a lion Palamon appear'd :

Or as two boars whom love to battle draws,

With rising bristles, and with frothy jaws,

Their

Their adverse breasts with tusks oblique they wound;
With grunts and groans the forest rings around.
So fought the knights, and fighting must abide,
Till fate an umpire sends their diff'rence to decide.
The pow'r that ministers to God's decrees,
And executes on earth what heav'n foresees,
Call'd providence, or chance, or fatal sway,
Comes with resistless force, and finds or makes her way.
Nor kings, nor nations, nor united pow'r,
One moment can retard th' appointed hour.
And some one day, some wondrous chance appears,
Which happen'd not in centuries of years :
For sure, whate'er we mortals hate, or love,
Or hope, or fear, depends on pow'rs above :
They move our appetites to good or ill,
And by foresight necessitate the will.

In Theseus this appears; whose youthful joy
Was beasts of chase in forests to destroy :
This gentle Knight, inspir'd by jolly May,
Forsook his easy couch at early day,
And to the wood and wilds pursu'd his way.
Beside him rode Hippolyta the queen,
And Emily, attir'd in lively green ;
With horns, and hounds, and all the tuneful cry,
To hunt a royal hart within the covert nigh :

And

And as he follow'd Mars before, so now
He serves the goddess of the silver bow.
The way that Theseus took was to the wood,
Where the two Knights in cruel battle stood ;
The lawn on which they fought, th' appointed place,
In which th' uncoupled hounds began the chase.
Thither forth-right he rode to rouse the prey,
That shaded by the fern in harbour lay ;
And thence dislodg'd, was wont to leave the wood,
For open fields, and cross the crystal flood.
Approach'd, and looking underneath the sun,
He saw proud Arcite, and fierce Palamon,
In mortal battle doubling blow on blow ;
Like lightning flam'd their fauchions to and fro,
And shot a dreadful gleam ; so strong they struck,
There seem'd less force requir'd to fell an oak.
He gaz'd with wonder on their equal might,
Look'd eager on, but knew not either Knight :
Resolv'd to learn, he spurr'd his fiery steed
With goring rowels, to provoke his speed.
The minute ended that began the race,
So soon he was betwixt 'em on the place :
And with his sword unsheath'd, on pain of life
Commands both combatants to cease their strife ;

Then

Then with imperious tone pursues his threat :

“ What are you ? Why in arms together met ?

“ How dares your pride presume against my laws,

“ As in a lifted field to fight your cause ?

“ Unask'd the royal grant ; no marshal by,

“ As knightly rites require ; nor judge to try ? ”

Then Palamon, with scarce recover'd breath,

Thus hasty spoke : ‘ We both deserve the death,

‘ And both would die ; for look the world around,

‘ A pair so wretched is not to be found.

‘ Our life's a load ; encumber'd with the charge,

‘ We long to set th' imprison'd soul at large.

‘ Now as thou art a sov'reign judge, decree

‘ The rightful doom of death to him and me,

‘ Let neither find thy grace ; for grace is cruelty. }
‘ Me first, O kill me first ; and cure my woe ;
‘ Then sheath the sword of justice on my foe :
‘ Or kill him first ; for when his name is heard,
‘ He foremost will receive his due reward.
‘ Arcite of Thebes is he ; thy mortal foe,
‘ On whom thy grace did liberty bestow ;
‘ But first contracted, that if ever found
‘ By day or night upon th' Athenian ground,
‘ His head should pay the forfeit : see return'd
‘ The perjur'd Knight, his oath and honour scorn'd :
‘ For

' For this is he, who with a borrow'd name
 ' And proffer'd service to thy palace came,
 ' Now call'd Philostratus : retain'd by thee,
 ' A traitor trusted, and in high degree,
 ' Aspiring to the bed of beauteous Emily.
 ' My part remains : from Thebes my birth I own,
 ' And call myself th' unhappy Palamon.
 ' Think me not like that man ; since no disgrace
 ' Can force me to renounce the honour of my race.
 ' Know me for what I am : I broke thy chain,
 ' Nor promis'd I thy pris'ner to remain :
 ' The love of liberty with life is giv'n,
 ' And life itself th' inferior gift of heav'n.
 ' Thus without crime I fled ; but farther know,
 ' I with this Arcite am thy mortal foe :
 ' Then give me death, since I thy life pursue ;
 ' For safeguard of thyself, death is my due.
 ' More wouldst thou know ? I love bright Emily,
 ' And for her sake and in her sight will die :
 ' But kill my rival too ; for he no less
 ' Deserves ; and I thy righteous doom will bless,
 ' Assur'd that what I lose, he never shall possess.'

To this reply'd the stern Athenian prince,
 And sourly smil'd : " In owning your offence

“ You judge yourself ; and I but keep record
“ In place of law, while you pronounce the word.
“ Take your desert, the death you have decreed ;
“ I seal your doom, and ratify the deed.
“ By Mars, the patron of my arms, you die.”

He said ; dumb sorrow seiz'd the standers-by.
The queen, above the rest, by nature good,
(The pattern form'd of perfect womanhood)
For tender pity wept : when she began,
Through the bright quire th' infectious virtue ran.
All dropp'd their tears, ev'n the contended maid ;
And thus among themselves they softly said :
‘ What eyes can suffer this unworthy fight !
‘ Two youths of royal blood, renown'd in fight,
‘ The mastership of heav'n in face and mind,
‘ And lovers, far beyond their faithless kind :
‘ See their wide streaming wounds ; they neither came
‘ For pride of empire, nor desire of fame :
‘ Kings fight for kingdoms, madmen for applause ;
‘ But love for love alone ; that crowns the lover's cause.’
This thought, which ever bribes the beauteous kind,
Such pity wrought in ev'ry lady's mind,
They left their steeds, and, prostrate on the place,
From the fierce king implor'd th' offenders' grace.

He

He paus'd a while, stood silent in his mood ;
(For yet his rage was boiling in his blood)
But soon his tender mind th' impression felt,
(As softest metals are not slow to melt ;
And pity soonest runs in gentle minds :)
Then reasons with himself; and first he finds
His passion cast a mist before his sense,
And either made, or magnify'd th' offence.
Offence ! of what ? to whom ? who judg'd the cause ?
The pris'ner freed himself by nature's laws :
Born free, he fought his right : the man he freed
Was perjur'd, but his love excus'd the deed :
Thus pond'ring, he look'd under with his eyes,
And saw the women's tears, and heard their cries ;
Which mov'd compassion more : he shook his head,
And softly sighing, to himself he said :

“ Curse on th' unpard'ning prince, whom tears can
draw

“ To no remorse ; who rules by lions' law ;

“ And deaf to pray'rs, by no submission bow'd,

“ Rends all alike, the penitent and proud :”

At this, with look serene, he rais'd his head ;

Reason resum'd her place, and passion fled :

Then thus aloud he spoke : “ The pow'r of love,

“ In earth, and seas, and air, and heav'n above,

“ Rules unresisted with an awful nod ;
“ By daily miracles declar’d a god :
“ He blinds the wise, gives eye-sight to the blind ;
“ And moulds and stamps anew the lover’s mind.
“ Behold that Arcite, and this Palamon,
“ Freed from my fetters, and in safety gone—
“ What hinder’d either in their native soil,
“ At ease to reap the harvest of their toil ?
“ But Love, their lord, did otherwise ordain,
“ And brought them in their own despite again,
“ To suffer death deserv’d ; for well they know,
“ ’Tis in my pow’r, and I their deadly foe :
“ The proverb holds, that to be wise and love,
“ Is hardly granted to the gods above.
“ See how the madmen bleed : behold the gains
“ With which their master, Love, rewards their pains :
“ For sev’n long ye ar on duty ev’ry day,
“ Lo ! their obedience, and their monarch’s pay.
“ Yet, as in duty bound, they serve him on ;
“ And ask the fools, they think it wisely done :
“ Nor ease, nor wealth, nor life itself regard,
“ For ’tis their maxim, love is love’s reward.
“ This is not all ; the fair for whom they strove,
“ Nor knew before, nor could suspect their love,
“ Nor

“Nor thought, when she beheld the fight from far,

“Her beauty was th’ occasion of the war.

“But sure a gen’ral doom on man is past,

“And all are fools and lovers, first or last :

“This both by others and myself I know,

“For I have serv’d their sov’reign long ago,

“Oft have been caught within the winding train

“Of female snares, and felt the lover’s pain,

“And learn’d how far the god can human hearts
constrain.

“To this remembrance, and the prayers of those

“Who for th’ offending warriors interpose,

“I give their forfeit lives ; on this accord,

“To do me homage as their sov’reign lord ;

“And as my vassals, to their utmost might,

“Assist my person, and assert my right.”

This freely sworn, the Knights their grace obtain’d;

Then thus the King his secret thoughts explain’d :

“If wealth, or honour, or a royal race,

“Or each, or all, may win a lady’s grace,

“Then either of you Knights may well deserve

“A princess born ; and such is she you serve :

“For Emily is sister to the crown,

“And but too well to both her beauty known :

Q 3

“ But

“ But should you combat till you both were dead,
“ Two lovers cannot share a single bed :
“ As therefore both are equal in degree,
“ The lot of both be left to destiny.
“ Now hear th’ award ; and happy may it prove
“ To her, and him who best deserves her love.
“ Depart from hence in peace, and free as air,
“ Search the wide world, and where you please repair ;
“ But on the day when this returning sun
“ To the same point through ev’ry sign has run,
“ Then each of you his hundred Knights shall bring,
“ In royal lists to fight before the king ;
“ And then the Knight, whom fate or happy chance
“ Shall with his friends to victory advance,
“ And grace his arms so far in equal fight,
“ From out the bars to force his opposite,
“ Or kill, or make him recreant on the plain,
“ The prize of valour and of love shall gain ;
“ The vanquish’d party shall their claim release,
“ And the long jars conclude in lasting peace.
“ The charge be mine t’ adorn the chosen ground,
“ The theatre of war, for champions so renown’d ;
“ And take the patron’s place of either Knight,
“ With eyes impartial to behold the fight ;
“ And heav’n of me so judge, as I shall judge aright. }

“ If

“ If both are satisfy'd with this accord,
“ Swear by the laws of knighthood on my sword.”

Who now but Palamon exults with joy?
And ravish'd Arcite seems to touch the sky:
The whole assembled troop was pleas'd as well,
Extol'd th' award, and on their knees they fell
To bless the gracious King. The Knights with leave
Departing from the place, his last commands receive;
On Emily with equal ardour look,
And from her eyes their inspiration took.
From thence to Thebes' old walls pursue their way,
Each to provide his champions for the day.

It might be deem'd on our historian's part,
Or too much negligence, or want of art,
If he forgot the vast magnificence
Of royal Theseus, and his large expence.
He first inclos'd for lists a level ground,
The whole circumference a mile around:
The form was circular; and all without
A trench was sunk, to moat the place about.
Within, an amphitheatre appear'd,
Rais'd in degrees; to sixty paces rear'd;
That when a man was plac'd in one degree,
Height was allow'd for him above to see.

Q4

Eastward

Eastward was built a gate of marble white ;
The like adorn'd the western opposite.
A nobler object than this fabrick was,
Rome never saw ; nor of so vast a space :
For, rich with spoils of many a conquer'd land,
All arts and artists Theseus could command ;
Who sold for hire, or wrought for better fame ;
The master painters and the carvers came.
So rose within the compass of a year
An age's work, a glorious theatre.
Then o'er its eastern gate was rais'd above
A temple, sacred to the queen of love ;
An altar stood below : on either hand
A priest with roses crown'd, who held a myrtle wand.

The dome of Mars was on the gate oppos'd,
And on the North a turret was inclos'd,
Within the wall, of alabaster white,
And crimson coral, for the queen of night,
Who takes in sylvan sports her chaste delight.

Within these oratories might you see
Rich carvings, portraitures, and imag'ry :
Where ev'ry figure to the life express'd
The godhead's pow'r, to whom it was address'd.
In Venus' temple, on the sides were seen
The broken slumbers of enamour'd men :

Pray'rs

Pray'rs that ev'n spoke, and pity seem'd to call,
And issuing sighs that smok'd along the wall:
Complaints, and hot desires, the lover's hell,
And scalding tears, that wore a channel where they
fell:

And all around were nuptial bonds, the ties
Of love's assurance, and a train of lies,
That, made in lust, conclude in perjuries.
Beauty, and youth, and wealth, and luxury,
And sprightly hope, and short-enduring joy;
And forceries to raise th' infernal pow'rs,
And sigils fram'd in planetary hours:
Expence, and after-thought, and idle care,
And doubts of motly hue, and dark despair:
Suspensions, and fantastical surmise,
And jealousy suffus'd, with jaundice in her eyes;
Discolouring all she view'd, in tawny dress'd;
Down-look'd, and with a cuckow on her fist.
Oppos'd to her, on t' other side advance
The costly feast, the carol, and the dance,
Minstrels and music, poetry and play,
And balls by night, and tournaments by day.
All these were painted on the wall, and more;
With acts and monuments of times before:

And

And others added by prophetic doom,
And lovers yet unborn, and loves to come:
For there th' Idalian mount, and Citheron,
The court of Venus, was in colours drawn:
Before the palace gate, in careless dress,
And loose array, sat portrets Idleness:
There, by the fount, Narcissus pin'd alone,
There Sampson was, with wiser Solomon,
And all the mighty names by love undone.
Medea's charms were there, Circean feasts,
With bowls that turn'd enamour'd youths to beasts.
Here might be seen, that beauty, wealth, and wit,
And prowess, to the pow'r of love submit:
The spreading snare for all mankind is laid;
And lovers all betray, and are betray'd.
The goddess' self some noble hand had wrought;
Smiling she seem'd, and full of pleasing thought:
From ocean as she first began to rise,
And smooth'd the ruffled seas, and clear'd the skies,
She trod the brine all bare below the breast,
And the green waves but ill conceal'd the rest:
A lute she held; and on her head was seen
A wreath of roses red, and myrtles green;
Her turtles fann'd the buxom air above;
And by his mother stood an infant Love,

With

With wings unfledg'd; his eyes were banded o'er,
His hands a bow, his back a quiver bore,
Supply'd with arrows bright and keen, a deadly store. }

But in the dome of mighty Mars the red,
With diff'rent figures all the sides were spread:
This temple, less in form, with equal grace
Was imitative of the first in Thrace:
For that cold region was the lov'd abode
And sov'reign mansion of the warrior-god.
The landscape was a forest wide and bare,
Where neither beast, nor human kind repair;
The fowl, that scent afar, the borders fly,
And shun the bitter blast, and wheel about the sky.
A cake of scurf lies baking on the ground,
And prickly stubs, instead of trees, are found;
Or woods with knots and knares deform'd and old,
Headless the most, and hideous to behold:
A rattling tempest through the branches went,
That stripp'd 'em bare, and one sole way they bent.
Heav'n froze above, severe, the clouds congeal,
And through the crystal vault appear'd the standing hail.
Such was the face without, a mountain stood
Threat'ning from high, and overlook'd the wood:
Beneath the low'ring brow, and on a bent,
The temple stood of Mars armipotent;

The

The frame of burnish'd steel, that cast a glare
From far, and seem'd to thaw the freezing air.
A strait, long entry, to the temple led,
Blind with high walls ; and horror over head :
Thence issued such a blast and hollow roar,
As threaten'd from the hinge to heave the door :
In, through that door, a northern light there shone ;
'Twas all it had, for windows there were none.
The gate was adamant ; eternal frame !
Which hew'd by Mars himself, from Indian quarries
came,
The labour of a God ; and all along
Tough iron plates were clench'd to make it strong.
A tun about was ev'ry pillar there ;
A polish'd mirror shone not half so clear.
There saw I how the secret felon wrought,
And treason lab'ring in the traitor's thought ;
And midwife time the ripen'd plot to murder brought. }
There, the red anger dar'd the pallid fear :
Next stood hypocrisy, with holy leer,
Soft smiling, and demurely looking down ;
But hid the dagger underneath the gown :
'Th' assassinating wife, the household fiend ;
And far the blackest there, the traitor-friend.

On

On t' other side there stood destruction bare ;
Unpunish'd rapine, and a waste of war.
Contest, with sharpen'd knives, in cloisters drawn,
And all with blood bespread the holy lawn.
Loud menaces were heard, and foul disgrace,
And bawling infamy, in language base ;
Till sense was lost in sound, and silence fled the place. }
The slayer of himself yet saw I there,
The gore congeal'd was clotted in his hair :
With eyes half clos'd, and gaping mouth he lay,
And grim, as when he breath'd his fullen soul away.
In midst of all the dome misfortune sat,
And gloomy discontent, and fell debate ;
And madness laughing in his ireful mood ;
And arm'd complaint on theft ; and cries of blood.
There was the murder'd corpse, in covert laid,
And violent death in thousand shapes display'd :
The city to the soldier's rage resign'd :
Successless wars, and poverty behind :
Ships burnt in fight, or forc'd on rocky shores,
And the rash hunter strangled by the boars :
The new-born babe by nurses overlaid ;
And the cook caught within the raging fire he made.
All ills of Mars his nature, flame and steel ;
The gasping charioteer, beneath the wheel

Of

Of his own car ; the ruin'd house that falls,
And intercepts her lord betwixt the walls:
The whole division that to Mars pertains,
All trades of death, that deal in steel for gains,
Were there : the butcher, armourer, and smith,
Who forges sharpen'd fauchions, or the scythe.
The scarlet conquest on a tow'r was plac'd,
With shouts, and soldiers' acclamations grac'd:
A pointed sword hung threat'ning o'er his head,
Sustain'd but by a slender twine of thread.
There saw I Mars his Ides, the Capitol,
The seer in vain foretelling Cæsar's fall,
The last Triumvirs, and the wars they move,
And Antony, who lost the world for love.
These and a thousand more the fane adorn ;
Their fates were painted ere the men were born ;
All copy'd from the heav'ns, and ruling force
Of the red star, in his revolving course.
The form of Mars high on a chariot stood,
All sheath'd in arms, and gruffly look'd the god :
Two geomantic figures were display'd
Above his head, a * warrior and a maid,
One when direct, and one when retrograde.

* Rubeus and Puella.

Tir'd with deformities of death, I haste
To the third temple of Diana chaste;
A sylvan scene with various greens was drawn,
Shades on the sides, and on the midst a lawn:
The silver Cynthia, with her nymphs around,
Pursu'd the flying deer, the woods with horns resound:
Calisto there stood manifest of shame,
And, turn'd a bear, the northern star became:
Her son was next, and by peculiar grace
In the cold circle held the second place:
The stag Acteon in the stream had spy'd
The naked huntress, and, for seeing, dy'd:
His hounds, unknowing of his change, pursue
The chase, and their mistaken master flew.
Peneian Daphne too was there to see,
Apollo's love before, and now his tree:
Th' adjoining fane th' assembled Greeks express'd,
And hunting of the Caledonian beast.
Cenides' valour, and his envy'd prize;
The fatal pow'r of Atalanta's eyes;
Diana's vengeance on the victor shown,
The murderess mother, and consuming son.
The Volscian queen extended on the plain;
The treason punish'd, and the traitor slain.

The

The rest were various huntings, well design'd,
And savage beasts destroy'd, of every kind.
The graceful goddess was array'd in green;
About her feet were little beagles seen,
That watch'd with upward eyes the motions of their
queen.

Her legs were buskin'd, and the left before,
In act to shoot; a silver bow she bore,
And at her back a painted quiver wore.
She trod a waxing moon, that soon would wane,
And drinking borrow'd light, be fill'd again:
With downcast eyes, as seeming to survey
The dark dominions, her alternate sway.
Before her stood a woman in her throes,
And call'd Lucina's aid, her burden to disclose.
All these the painter drew with such command,
That Nature snatch'd the pencil from his hand,
Asham'd and angry that his art could feign
And mend the tortures of a mother's pain.
Theseus beheld the fanes of ev'ry god,
And thought his mighty cost was well bestow'd.
So princes now their poets should regard;
But few can write, and fewer can reward.

The theatre thus rais'd, the lifts enclos'd,
And all with vast magnificence dispos'd,

We

We leave the Monarch pleas'd, and haste to bring
The Knights to combat; and their arms to sing.

The day approach'd, when fortune should decide
Th' important enterprize, and give the bride;
For now, the rivals round the world had fought,
And each his number, well-appointed, brought.

The nations, far and near, contend in choice,
And send the flow'r of war by public voice;

That after, or before, were never known
Such chiefs; as each an army seem'd alone:

Besides the champions, all of high degree,
Who knighthood lov'd and deeds of chivalry,

Throng'd to the lists, and envy'd to behold
The names of others, not their own, enroll'd.

Nor seems it strange; for ev'ry noble Knight,
Who loves the fair, and is endu'd with might,

In such a quarrel would be proud to fight.

There breathes not scarce a man on British ground

(An isle for love and arms of old renown'd)

But would have sold his life to purchase fame,

To Palamon or Arcite sent his name;

And had the land selected of the best,

Half had come hence, and let the world provide the rest.

A hundred Knights with Palamon there came,

Approv'd in fight, and men of mighty name:

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R

Their

Their arms were sev'ral, as their nations were,
But furnish'd all alike with sword and spear.
Some wore coat-armour, imitating scale;
And next their skins were stubborn shirts of mail:
Some wore a breast-plate and a light jupon,
Their horses cloth'd with rich caparison:
Some for defence would leathern bucklers use,
Of folded hides; and others shields of pruce:
One hung a pole-axe at his saddle-bow,
And one a heavy mace, to shun the foe:
One for his legs and knees provided well,
With *jambeux* arm'd, and double plates of steel:
This on his helmet wore a lady's glove,
And that a sleeve embroider'd by his love.

With Palamon, above the rest in place,
Lycurgus came, the surly king of Thrace;
Black was his beard, and manly was his face:
The balls of his broad eyes roll'd in his head,
And glar'd betwixt a yellow and a red:
He look'd a lion with a gloomy stare,
And o'er his eyebrows hung his matted hair:
Big-bon'd, and large of limbs, with sinews strong,
Broad-shoulder'd, and his arms were round and long:
Four milk-white bulls (the Thracian use of old)
Were yok'd to draw his car of burnish'd gold.

Upright

Upright he stood, and bore aloft his shield,
Conspicuous from afar, and overlook'd the field.
His surcoat was a bear-skin on his back ;
His hair hung long behind, and glossy raven-black.

His ample forehead bore a coronet,
With sparkling diamonds and with rubies set :

Ten brace and more of greyhounds snowy fair,
And tall as stags, ran loose, and cours'd around his }
chair, }
A match for pards in flight; in grappling, for the }
bear. }

With golden muzzles all their mouths were bound,
And collars of the same their necks surround.
Thus through the fields Lycurgus took his way;
His hundred Knights attend in pomp and proud array.

To match this monarch, with strong Arcite came
Emetrios king of Inde, a mighty name,
On a bay courser, goodly to behold,
The trappings of his horse emboss'd with barb'rous gold :
Not Mars bestrode a steed with greater grace ;
His surcoat o'er his arms was cloth of Thrace,
Adorn'd with pearls, all orient, round, and great ;
His saddle was of gold with em'rals set.
His shoulders large a mantle did attire,
With rubies thick, and sparkling as the fire :

His amber-colour'd locks in ringlets run,
With graceful negligence, and shone against the
sun.

His nose was aquiline, his eyes were blue,
Ruddy his lips, and fresh and fair his hue :
Some sprinkled freckles on his face were seen,
Whose dusk set off the whiteness of the skin :
His awful presence did the crowd surprise,
Nor durst the rash spectator meet his eyes ;
Eyes that confess'd him born for kingly sway,
So fierce, they flash'd intolerable day.
His age in nature's youthful prime appear'd,
And just began to bloom his yellow beard.
Whene'er he spoke, his voice was heard around,
Loud as a trumpet, with a silver sound.
A laurel wreath'd his temples, fresh and green ;
And myrtle-sprigs, the marks of love, were mix'd be-
tween.

Upon his fist he bore, for his delight,
An eagle well reclaim'd, and lily-white.

His hundred Knights attend him to the war,
All arm'd for battle ; save their heads were bare.
Words and devices blaz'd on ev'ry shield,
And pleasing was the terror of the field.

For

For kings, and dukes, and barons you might see,
Like sparkling stars, though different in degree,
All for th' increase of arms, and love of chivalry. }

Before the king tame leopards led the way,
And troops of lions innocently play.

So Bacchus through the conquer'd Indies rode,
And beasts in gambols frisk'd before their honest god.

In this array the war of either side
Through Athens pass'd with military pride.
At prime, they enter'd on the Sunday morn;
Rich tap'stry spread the streets, and flow'rs the pots
adorn.

The town was all a jubilee of feasts;
So Theseus will'd, in honour of his guests;
Himself with open arms the king embrac'd,
Then all the rest in their degrees were grac'd.
No harbinger was needful for the night,
For ev'ry house was proud to lodge a knight.

I pass the royal treat, nor must relate
The gifts bestow'd, nor how the champions fate;
Who first, who last, or how the knights address'd
Their vows, or who was fairest at the feast;
Whose voice, whose graceful dance did most surprise,
Soft am'rous sighs, and silent love of eyes.

The rivals call my muse another way,
To sing their vigils for th' ensuing day.

'Twas ebbing darkness, past the noon of night;
And Phosphor, on the confines of the light,
Promis'd the sun, ere day began to spring;
The tuneful lark already stretch'd her wing,
And, flick'ring on her nest, made short essays to sing;
When wakeful Palamon, preventing day,
Took to the royal lists his early way,
To Venus, at her fane, in her own house, to pray.

There, falling on his knees before her shrine,
He thus implor'd with pray'rs her pow'r divine:

' Creator Venus, genial pow'r of love,
' The blifs of men below, and gods above,
' Beneath the sliding sun thou runn'st thy race,
' Dost fairest shine, and best become thy place.
' For thee the winds their eastern blasts forbear,
' Thy month reveals the spring, and opens all the year.
' Thee, Goddess, thee the storms of winter fly,
' Earth smiles with flow'rs renewing; laughs the sky,
' And birds to lays of love their tuneful notes apply.
' For thee the lion loaths the taste of blood,
' And roaring hunts his female through the wood:
' For thee the bulls rebellow through the groves,
' And tempt the stream, and snuff their absent loves.

' 'Tis

'Tis thine, whate'er is pleasant, good, or fair: }
 All nature is thy province, life thy care ; }
 Thou mad'st the world, and dost the world repair. }
 Thou gladder of the mount of Cytheron,
 Increase of Jove, companion of the sun ;
 If e'er Adonis touch'd thy tender heart,
 Have pity, Goddess, for thou know'st the smart.
 Alas ! I have not words to tell my grief ;
 To vent my sorrow would be some relief ;
 Light suff'rings give us leisure to complain ;
 We groan, but cannot speak, in greater pain.
 O Goddess, tell thyself what I would say,
 Thou know'st it, and I feel too much to pray.
 So grant my suit, as I enforce my might,
 In love to be thy champion and thy knight ;
 A servant to thy sex, a slave to thee,
 A foe profess'd to barren chastity.
 Nor ask I fame or honour of the field,
 Nor choose I more to vanquish than to yield :
 In my divine Emilia make me blest,
 Let fate, or partial chance, dispose the rest :
 Find thou the manner, and the means prepare ;
 Possession, more than conquest, is my care.
 Mars is the warrior's god ; in him it lies,
 On whom he favours to confer the prize ;

‘ With smiling aspect you serenely move
‘ In your fifth orb, and rule the realm of love.
‘ The Fates but only spin the coarser clue,
‘ The finest of the wool is left for you.
‘ Spare me but one small portion of the twine,
‘ And let the sisters cut below your line :
‘ The rest among the rubbish may they sweep,
‘ Or add it to the yarn of some old miser’s heap.
‘ But if you this ambitious pray’r deny,
‘ (A wish, I grant, beyond mortality)
‘ Then let me sink beneath proud Arcite’s arms,
‘ And, I once dead, let him possess her charms.’

Thus ended he ; then, with observance due,
The sacred incense on her altar threw :
The curling smoke mounts heavy from the fires ;
At length it catches flame, and in a blaze expires ;
At once the gracious goddess gave the sign,
Her statue shook, and trembled all the shrine :
Pleas’d Palamon the tardy omen took :
For, since the flames pursu’d the trailing smoke,
He knew his boon was granted ; but the day
To distance driv’n, and joy adjourn’d with long delay.

Now morn with rosy light had streak’d the sky,
Up rose the sun, and up rose Emily ;

Address’d

Address'd her early steps to Cynthia's fane,
In state attended by her maiden train,
Who bore the vests that holy rites require,
Incense, and od'rous gums, and cover'd fire,
The plenteous horns with pleasant mead they crown,
Nor wanted aught besides in honour of the moon.
Now while the temple smok'd with hallow'd steam,
They wash the virgin in a living stream ;
The secret ceremonies I conceal ;
Uncouth, perhaps unlawful to reveal :
But such they were as pagan use requir'd,
Perform'd by women when the men retir'd,
Whose eyes profane their chaste mysterious rites
Might turn to scandal, or obscene delights.
Well-meaners think no harm ; but for the rest,
Things sacred they pervert, and silence is the best.
Her shining hair, uncomb'd, was loosely spread,
A crown of massless oak adorn'd her head :
When to the shrine approach'd, the spotless maid
Had kindling fires on either altar laid :
(The rites were such as were observ'd of old,
By Statius in his Theban story told.)
Then kneeling, with her hand across her breast,
Thus slowly she preferr'd her chaste request :

‘ O Goddess,

‘ O Goddess, haunter of the woodland green,
‘ To whom both heav’n and earth and seas are seen;
‘ Queen of the nether skies, where half the year
‘ Thy silver beams descend, and light the gloomy
 sphere;
‘ Goddess of maids, and conscious of our hearts,
‘ So keep me from the vengeance of thy darts,
‘ Which Niobe’s devoted issue felt,
‘ When hissing through the skies the feather’d deaths
 were dealt :
‘ As I desire to live a virgin-life,
‘ Nor know the name of mother, or of wife.
‘ Thy votress from my tender years I am,
‘ And love, like thee, the woods and sylvan game.
‘ Like death, thou know’st, I loath the nuptial state,
‘ And man, the tyrant of our sex, I hate,
‘ A lowly servant, but a lofty mate. }
‘ Where love is duty, on the female side :
‘ Or theirs mere sensual gust, and fought with surly
 pride.
‘ Now by thy triple shape, as thou art seen
‘ In heav’n, earth, hell, and ev’ry where a queen,
‘ Grant this my first desire ; let discord cease,
‘ And make betwixt the rivals lasting peace :

‘ Quench

' Quench their hot fire, or far from me remove
 ' The flame, and turn it on some other love.
 ' Or if my frowning stars have so decreed,
 ' That one may be rejected, one succeed,
 ' Make him my lord, within whose faithful breast
 ' Is fixt my image, and who loves me best.
 ' But, oh ! ev'n that avert ! I choose it not,
 ' But take it as the least unhappy lot.
 ' A maid I am, and of thy virgin train ;
 ' Oh, let me still that spotless name retain !
 ' Frequent the forests, thy chaste will obey,
 ' And only make the beasts of chase my prey !'

The flames ascend on either altar clear,
 While thus the blameless maid address'd her pray'r.
 When lo ! the burning fire, that shone so bright,
 Flew off, all sudden, with extinguish'd light,
 And left one altar dark, a little space ;
 Which turn'd self-kindled, and renew'd the blaze :
 The other victor-flame a moment stood,
 Then fell, and lifeless left th' extinguish'd wood :
 For ever lost, th' irrevocable light
 Forsook the black'ning coals, and sunk to night :
 At either end it whistled as it flew,
 And as the brands were green, so dropp'd the dew ;
 Infected as it fell with sweat of sanguine hue.

The

The maid from that ill omen turn'd her eyes,
And with loud shrieks and clamours rent the skies,
Nor knew what signify'd the boding sign,
But found the pow'rs displeas'd, and fear'd the wrath
divine.

Then shook the sacred shrine, and sudden light
Sprung through the vaulted roof, and made the temple bright.

The pow'r, behold! the pow'r in glory shone,
By her bent bow, and her keen arrows known;
The rest, a huntress issuing from the wood,
Reclining on her cornel spear she stood;
Then gracious thus began: "Dismiss thy fear,
" And heav'n's unchang'd decrees attentive hear:
" More pow'rful gods have torn thee from my side,
" Unwilling to resign, and doom'd a bride:
" The two contending Knights are weigh'd above;
" One Mars protects, and one the Queen of Love:
" But which the man, is in the Thund'rer's breast;
" This he pronounc'd, 'tis he who loves thee best.
" The fire that, once extinct, reviv'd again,
" Foreshows the love allotted to remain.
" Farewel," she said, and vanish'd from the place;
The sheaf of arrows shook and rattled in the case.

Aghast

Aghast at this the royal virgin stood,
Disclaim'd, and now no more a sister of the wood;
But to the parting goddess thus she pray'd :
' Propitious still, be present to my aid,
' Nor quite abandon your once-favour'd maid.' }
Then sighing she return'd ; but smil'd betwixt,
With hopes and fears, and joy with sorrow mixt.

The next returning planetary hour
Of Mars, who shar'd the heptarchy of pow'r,
His steps bold Arcite to the temple bent,
T' adore with pagan rites the pow'r armipotent :
Then prostrate, low before his altar lay,
And rais'd his manly voice, and thus began to pray :
" Strong God of Arms, whose iron scepter sways
" The freezing North, and Hyperborean seas,
" And Scythian colds, and Thracia's wintry coast,
" Where stand thy steeds, and thou art honour'd most :
" There most ; but ev'ry where thy pow'r is known,
" The fortune of the fight is all thy own :
" Terror is thine, and wild amazement flung
" From out thy chariot, withers ev'n the strong :
" And disarray and shameful rout ensue,
" And force is added to the fainting crew.
" Acknowledg'd as thou art, accept my pray'r,
" If aught I have atchiev'd deserve thy care :
" I to

“ If to my utmost pow’r with sword and shield
“ I dar’d the death, unknowing how to yield,
“ And falling in my rank, still kept the field :
“ Then let my arms prevail, by thee sustain’d,
“ That Emily by conquest may be gain’d.
“ Have pity on my pains ; nor those unknown
“ To Mars, which, when a lover, were his own.
“ Venus, the public care of all above,
“ Thy stubborn heart has soften’d into love :
“ Now by her blandishments and powerful charms,
“ When yielded she lay curling in thy arms,
“ Ev’n by thy shame, if shame it may be call’d,
“ When Vulcan had thee in his net intrall’d ;
“ O envy’d ignominy ! sweet disgrace !
“ When ev’ry god that saw thee, wish’d thy place !
“ By those dear pleasures, aid my arms in fight,
“ And make me conquer in my patron’s right :
“ For I am young, a novice in the trade,
“ The fool of Love, unpractis’d to persuade ;
“ And want the soothing arts that catch the fair,
“ But, caught myself, lie struggling in the snare :
“ And she I love, or laughs at all my pain,
“ Or knows her worth too well, and pays me with
 disdain.

“ For

“ For sure I am, unless I win in arms,
“ To stand excluded from Emilia’s charms :
“ Nor can my strength avail, unless by thee
“ Endu’d with force, I gain the victory :
“ Then for the fire which warm’d thy gen’rous heart,
“ Pity thy subject’s pains, and equal smart.
“ So be the morrow’s sweat and labour mine,
“ The palm and honour of the conquest thine :
“ Then shall the war, and stern debate, and strife
“ Immortal, be the bus’ness of my life ;
“ And in thy fane, the dusty spoils among,
“ High on the burnish’d roof my banner shall be hung,
“ Rank’d with my champions bucklers, and below,
“ With arms revers’d, th’ atchievements of my foe :
“ And while these limbs the vital spirit feeds,
“ While day to night, and night to day succeeds,
“ Thy smoking altar shall be fat with food
“ Of incense, and the grateful steam of blood ;
“ Burnt-off’rings morn and ev’ning shall be thine ;
“ And fires eternal in thy temple shine.
“ The bush of yellow beard, this length of hair,
“ Which from my birth inviolate I bear,
“ Guiltless of steel, and from the razor free,
“ Shall fall, a plenteous crop, reserv’d for thee.

“ So

“ So may my arms with victory be blest,

“ I ask no more ; let fate dispose the rest.”

The champion ceas'd ; there follow'd in the close
A hollow groan, a murm'ring wind arose,
The rings of iron, that on the doors were hung,
Sent out a jarring sound, and harshly rung :
The bolted gates flew open at the blast,
The storm rush'd in, and Arcite stood aghast :
The flames were blown aside, yet shone they bright,
Fann'd by the wind, and gave a ruffled light.

Then from the ground a scent began to rise,
Sweet-smelling, as accepted sacrifice :
This omen pleas'd, and as the flames aspire,
With od'rous incense Arcite heaps the fire ;
Nor wanted hymns to Mars, or Heathen charms :
At length the nodding statue clash'd his arms ;
And with a fullen sound and feeble cry,
Half sunk, and half pronounc'd the word of victory.
For this, with soul devout, he thank'd the god,
And, of success secure, return'd to his abode.

These vows thus granted rais'd a strife above,
Betwixt the God of War and Queen of Love.
She granting first, had right of time to plead ;
But he had granted too, nor would recede.

Jove

Jove was for Venus ; but he fear'd his wife,
And seem'd unwilling to decide the strife ;
Till Saturn from his leaden throne arose,
And found a way the diff'rence to compose :
Though sparing of his grace, to mischief bent,
He seldom does a good with good intent.
Wayward, but wise ; by long experience taught,
To please both parties, for ill ends, he fought :
For this advantage age from youth has won,
As not to be out-riden, though out-run.
By Fortune he was now to Venus trin'd,
And with stern Mars in Capricorn was join'd :
Of him disposing in his own abode,
He sooth'd the goddess, while he gull'd the god :
' Cease, daughter, to complain ; and stint the strife ;
' Thy Palamon shall have his promis'd wife ;
' And Mars, the lord of conquest, in the fight
' With palm and laurel shall adorn his knight.
' Wide is my course, nor turn I to my place,
' Till length of time, and move with tardy pace.
' Man feels me, when I press th' ethereal plains,
' My hand is heavy, and the wound remains.
' Mine is the shipwreck, in a watery sign ;
' And in an earthy, the dark dungeon mine.

‘ Cold, shiv’ring agues, melancholy care,
‘ And bitter blasting winds, and poison’d air,
‘ Are mine, and wilful death, resulting from despair. }
‘ The throttling quinsy ’tis my star appoints,
‘ And rheumatisms I send to rack the joints:
‘ When churls rebel against their native prince,
‘ I arm their hands, and furnish the pretence ;
‘ And housing in the lion’s hateful sign,
‘ Bought senates and deserting troops are mine :
‘ Mine is the privy pois’ning ; I command
‘ Unkindly seasons, and ungrateful land.
‘ By me kings’ palaces are push’d to ground,
‘ And miners crush’d beneath their mines are found.
‘ ’Twas I slew Sampson, when the pillar’d hall
‘ Fell down, and crush’d the many with the fall.
‘ My looking is the fire of pestilence,
‘ That sweeps at once the people and the prince.
‘ Now weep no more, but trust my grandfire’s art ;
‘ Mars shall be pleas’d, and thou perform thy part.
‘ ’Tis ill, though diff’rent your complexions are,
‘ The family of heav’n for men should war.’
Th’ expedient pleas’d, where neither lost his right :
Mars had the day, and Venus had the night.
The management they left to Chronos’ care ;
Now turn we to th’ effect, and sing the war.

In

In Athens all was pleasure, mirth and play,
All proper to the Spring, and sprightly May ;
Which ev'ry soul inspir'd with such delight,
'Twas justing all the day, and love at night.
Heav'n smil'd, and gladdened was the heart of man ;
And Venus had the world, as when it first began.
At length in sleep their bodies they compose,
And dreamt the future fight, and early rose.

Now scarce the dawning day began to spring,
As at a signal giv'n, the streets with clamours ring :
At once the crowd arose ; confus'd and high,
Ev'n from the heav'n was heard a shouting cry ;
For Mars was early up, and rous'd the sky. }
The gods came downward to behold the wars,
Sharp'ning their fights, and leaning from their stars ;
The neighing of the gen'rous horse was heard,
For battle by the busy groom prepar'd :
Rustling of harness, rattling of the shield,
Clatt'ring of armour, furbish'd for the field.
Crowds to the castle mounted up the street,
Batt'ring the pavement with their coursers' feet :
The greedy fight might there devour the gold
Of glitt'ring arms, too dazzling to behold ;
And polish'd steel, that cast the view aside,
And crested morions, with their plummy pride.

Knights, with a long retinue of their squires,
 In gaudy liv'ries march, and quaint attires.
 One lac'd the helm, another held the lance;
 A third the shining buckler did advance.

The courser paw'd the ground with restless feet,
 And snorting foam'd, and champ'd the golden bit.

The smiths and armourers on palfreys ride,
 Files in their hands, and hammers at their side,
 And nails for loosen'd spears, and thongs for shields }
 provide.

The yeomen guard the streets, in seemly bands;
 And clowns come crowding on, with cudgels in their
 hands.

The trumpets, next the gate, in order plac'd,
 Attend the sign to sound the martial blast:
 The palace-yard is fill'd with floating tides,
 And the last comers bear the former to the sides.
 The throng is in the midst: the common crew
 Shut out, the hall admits the better few;
 In knots they stand, or in a rank they walk,
 Serious in aspect, earnest in their talk:
 Factionous, and fav'ring this or t'other side,
 As their strong fancies and weak reason guide:
 Their wagers back their wishes: numbers hold
 With the fair freckled king, and beard of gold:

So

So vig'rous are his eyes, such rays they cast,
So prominent his eagle's beak is plac'd.
But most their looks on the black monarch bend,
His rising muscles, and his brawn commend;
His double-biting ax, and beamy spear,
Each asking a gigantic force to rear.
All spoke as partial favour mov'd the mind;
And, safe themselves, at others cost divin'd.

Wak'd by the cries, th' Athenian chief arose,
The knightly forms of combat to dispose;
And passing through th' obsequious guards, he sat
Conspicuous on a throne, sublime in state;
There for the two contending Knights he sent;
Arm'd cap-a-pee, with rev'rence low they bent:
He smil'd on both, and with superior look
Alike their offer'd adoration took.
The people press on ev'ry side to see
Their awful prince, and hear his high decree.
Then signing to their heralds with his hand,
They gave his orders from their lofty stand.
Silence is thrice enjoin'd; then thus aloud
The king at arms bespeaks the knights and list'ning
crowd.

‘ Our sovereign lord has ponder'd in his mind
‘ The means to spare the blood of gentle kind;

‘ And of his grace and in-born clemency,
‘ He modifies his first severe decree ;
‘ The keener edge of battle to rebate,
‘ The troops for honour fighting, not for hate.
‘ He wills, not death should terminate their strife;
‘ And wounds, if wounds ensue, be short of life.
‘ But issues, ere the fight, his dread command,
‘ That slings afar, and poniards hand to hand,
‘ Be banish’d from the field ; that none shall dare
‘ With short’ned sword to stab in closer war ;
‘ But in fair combat fight with manly strength,
‘ Nor push with biting point, but strike at length.
‘ The tourney is allow’d but one career,
‘ Of the tough ash, with the sharp-grinded spear.
‘ But knights unhors’d may rise from off the plain,
‘ And fight on foot, their honour to regain.
‘ Nor, if at mischief taken, on the ground
‘ Be slain, but pris’ners to the pillar bound,
‘ At either barrier plac’d ; nor, captives made,
‘ Be freed, or arm’d anew the fight invade.
‘ The chief of either side, bereft of life,
‘ Or yielded to his foe, concludes the strife.
‘ Thus dooms the lord : now valiant knights and young,
‘ Fight each his fill with swords and maces long.’

The

The herald ends : the vaulted firmament
With loud acclaims and vast applause is rent :
“ Heav’n guard a prince so gracious and so good,
“ So just, and yet so provident of blood !”
This was the gen’ral cry. The trumpets found,
And warlike symphony is heard around.
The marching troops through Athens take their way,
The great earl-marshal orders their array.
The fair from high the passing pomp behold ;
A rain of flow’rs is from the windows roll’d.
The casements are with golden tissue spread,
And horses hoofs, for earth, on silken tap’stry tread.
The king goes midmost, and the rivals ride
In equal rank, and close is either side.
Next after these, there rode the royal wife,
With Emily, the cause and the reward of strife.
The following cavalcade, by three and three,
Proceed by titles marshal’d in degree.
Thus through the southern gate they take their way,
And at the lists arriv’d ere prime of day.
There, parting from the king, the chiefs divide,
And, wheeling east and west, before their many ride ;
Th’ Athenian monarch mounts his throne on high,
And after him the Queen and Emily :

Next these, the kindred of the crown are grac'd
With nearer seats, and lords by ladies plac'd.
Scarce were they seated, when with clamours loud
In rush'd at once a rude promiscuous crowd:
The guards, and then each other overbear,
And in a moment throng the spacious theatre.
Now chang'd the jarring noise to whispers low,
As winds forsaking seas more softly blow;
When at the western gate, on which the car
Is plac'd aloft, that bears the God of War,
Proud Arcite ent'ring arm'd before his train,
Stops at the barrier, and divides the plain.
Red was his banner, and display'd abroad
The bloody colours of his patron god.

At that self moment enters Palamon
The gate of Venus, and the rising sun;
Wav'd by the wanton winds, his banner flies,
All maiden white, and shares the people's eyes.
From east to west, look all the world around,
Two troops so match'd were never to be found;
Such bodies built for strength, of equal age,
In stature siz'd; so proud an equipage:
The nicest eye could no distinction make,
Where lay th' advantage, or what side to take.

Thus

Thus rang'd, the herald for the last proclaims
A silence, while they answer'd to their names :
For so the king decreed, to shun with care
The fraud of musters false, the common bane of war.
The tale was just ; and then the gates were clos'd ;
And chief to chief, and troop to troop oppos'd.
The heralds last retir'd, and loudly cry'd,
" The fortune of the field be fairly try'd."

At this, the challenger with fierce defy
His trumpet sounds ; the challeng'd makes reply, }
With clangor rings the field, resounds the vaulted
sky.

Their vizors clos'd, their lances in the rest,
Or at the helmet pointed, or the crest ;
They vanish from the barrier, speed the race,
And spurring see decrease the middle space.
A cloud of smoke envelops either host,
And all at once the combatants are lost :
Darkling they join adverse, and shock unseen,
Coursers with coursers jostling, men with men :
As lab'ring in eclipse, a while they stay,
Till the next blast of wind restores the day.
They look anew : the beauteous form of fight
Is chang'd, and war appears a grizly fight.

Two

Two troops in fair array one moment shew'd ;
The next, a field with fallen bodies strow'd :
Not half the number in their seats are found ;
But men and steeds lie grov'ling on the ground.
The points of spears are stuck within the shield,
The steeds without their riders scour the field.
The knights unhors'd, on foot renew the fight ;
The glitt'ring fauchions cast a gleaming light ;
Hauberks and helms are hew'd with many a wound ;
Out spins the streaming blood, and dyes the ground.
The mighty maces with such haste descend,
They break the bones, and make the solid armour bend.
This thrusts amid the throng with furious force ;
Down goes at once the horseman and the horse :
That courser stumbles on the fallen steed,
And flound'ring, throws the rider o'er his head.
One rolls along, a foot-ball to his foes ;
One with a broken truncheon deals his blows.
This halting, this disabled with his wound,
In triumph led, is to the pillar bound ;
Where by the king's award he must abide :
There goes a captive led on t'other side.
By fits they cease ; and leaning on the lance,
Take breath a while, and to new fight advance.

Full

Full oft the rivals met, and neither spar'd
His utmost force, and each forgot to ward.
The head of this was to the saddle bent,
That other backward to the crupper sent:
Both were by turns unhors'd; the jealous blows
Fall thick and heavy, when on foot they close.
So deep their fauchions bite, that ev'ry stroke
Pierc'd to the quick; and equal wounds they gave and
took.

Borne far asunder by the tides of men,
Like adamant and steel they meet again.

So when a tiger sucks a bullock's blood,
A famish'd lion issuing from the wood
Roars lordly fierce, and challenges the food. }
Each claims possession, neither will obey,
But both their paws are fasten'd on the prey:
They bite, they tear; and while in vain they strive,
The swains come arm'd between, and both to distance
drive.

At length, as fate fore-doom'd, and all things tend
By course of time to their appointed end;
So when the sun to west was far declin'd,
And both afresh in mortal battle join'd,
The strong Emetrius came in Arcite's aid,
And Palamon with odds was overlaid:

For

For turning short, he struck with all his might
Full on the helmet of th' unwary Knight.
Deep was the wound; he stagger'd with the blow,
And turn'd him to his unexpected foe;
Whom with such force he struck, he fell'd him
down,

And cleft the circle of his golden crown.
But Arcite's men, who now prevail'd in fight,
Twice ten at once surround the single Knight:
O'erpower'd at length, they force him to the ground,
Unyielded as he was, and to the pillar bound;
And king Lycurgus, while he fought in vain
His friend to free, was tumbled on the plain.

Who now laments but Palamon, compell'd
No more to try the fortune of the field!
And, worse than death, to view with hateful eyes
His rival's conquest, and renounce the prize!

The royal judge on his tribunal plac'd,
Who had beheld the fight from first to last,
Bade cease the war; pronouncing from on high,
"Arcite of Thebes had won the beauteous Emily."
The sound of trumpets to the voice reply'd,
And round the royal lifts the heralds cry'd,
"Arcite of Thebes has won the beauteous bride."

The

The people rend the skies with vast applause;
All own the chief, when fortune owns the cause.
Arcite is own'd ev'n by the gods above,
And conqu'ring Mars insults the Queen of Love.
So laugh'd he, when the rightful Titan fail'd,
And Jove's usurping arms in heav'n prevail'd.
Laugh'd all the pow'rs who favour tyranny;
And all the standing army of the sky.
But Venus with dejected eyes appears,
And weeping on the lists distill'd her tears;
Her will refus'd, which grieves a woman most,
And, in her champion foil'd, the cause of love is lost.
Till Saturn said, "Fair daughter, now be still,
"The blust'ring fool has satisfy'd his will:
"His boon is giv'n; his Knight has gain'd the day,
"But lost the prize; th' arrears are yet to pay.
"Thy hour is come, and mine the care shall be
"To please thy Knight, and set thy promise free."

Now while the heralds run the lists around,
And Arcite, Arcite, heav'n and earth resound;
A miracle (nor less it could be call'd)
Their joy with unexpected sorrow pall'd.
The victor Knight had laid his helm aside,
Part for his ease, the greater part for pride:

Bare-

Bare-headed, popularly low he bow'd,
And paid the salutations of the crowd :
Then, spurring at full speed, ran endlong on
Where Theseus sat on his imperial throne ;
Furious he drove, and upward cast his eye,
Where next the Queen was plac'd his Emily :
Then passing, to the faddle-bow he bent ;
A sweet regard the gracious virgin lent:
(For women, to the brave an easy prey,
Still follow fortune, where she leads the way :)
Just then, from earth sprung out a flashing fire,
By Pluto sent, at Saturn's bad desire.
The startling steed was seiz'd with sudden fright,
And, bounding, o'er the pummel cast the Knight :
Forward he flew, and pitching on his head,
He quiver'd with his feet, and lay for dead.
Black was his count'nance in a little space,
For all the blood was gather'd in his face.
Help was at hand ; they rear'd him from the ground,
And from his cumbrous arms his limbs unbound ;
Then lanc'd a vein, and watch'd returning breath ;
It came, but clogg'd with symptoms of his death.
The faddle-bow the noble parts had prest,
All bruise'd and mortify'd his manly breast.

Him

Him still entranc'd, and in a litter laid,
They bore from field, and to his bed convey'd.
At length he wak'd, and with a feeble cry,
The word he first pronounc'd was, Emily.

Mean time the King, though inwardly he mourn'd,
In pomp triumphant to the town return'd,
Attended by the chiefs, who fought the field;
(Now friendly mix'd, and in one troop compell'd)
Compos'd his looks to counterfeited cheer,
And bade them not for Arcite's life to fear.
But that which gladdened all the warrior train,
Though most were sorely wounded, none were slain.
The surgeons soon despoil'd them of their arms,
And some with salves they cure, and some with
 charms ;
Foment the bruises, and the pains assuage,
And heal their inward hurts with sov'reign draughts
 of sage.
The King in person visits all around,
Comforts the sick, congratulates the sound ;
Honours the princely chiefs, rewards the rest,
And holds for thrice three days a royal feast.
None was disgrac'd ; for falling is no shame ;
And cowardice alone is loss of fame.

The

The vent'rous knight is from the saddle thrown;
But 'tis the fault of fortune, not his own.
If crowns and palms the conqu'ring side adorn,
The victor under better stars was born:
The brave man seeks not popular applause,
Nor overpower'd with arms deserts his cause;
Unsham'd, though foil'd, he does the best he can;
Force is of brutes, but honour is of man.

Thus Theseus smil'd on all with equal grace,
And each was set according to his place.
With ease were reconcil'd the diff'ring parts,
For envy never dwells in noble hearts.
At length they took their leave, the time expir'd;
Well pleas'd; and to their sev'ral homes retir'd.

Mean while the health of Arcite still impairs;
From bad proceeds to worse, and mocks the leeches
cares:

Swoln is his breast; his inward pains increase;
All means are us'd, and all without success.
The clotted blood lies heavy on his heart,
Corrupts, and there remains in spite of art:
Nor breathing veins, nor cupping will prevail;
All outward remedies and inward fail:
The mold of nature's fabrick is destroy'd,
Her vessels discompos'd, her virtue void:

The

The bellows of his lungs begin to swell;
 All out of frame is ev'ry secret cell,
 Nor can the good receive, nor bad expel.
 Those breathing organs thus within oppress,
 With venom soon distend the sinews of his breast.
 Nought profits him to save abandon'd life,
 Nor vomits upward aid, nor downward laxative.
 The midmost region batter'd and destroy'd,
 When nature cannot work, th' effect of art is void.
 For physic can but mend our crazy state,
 Patch an old building, not a new create.

Arcite is doom'd to die in all his pride,
 Must leave his youth, and yield his beauteous bride,
 Gain'd hardly, against right, and unenjoy'd.
 When 'twas declar'd all hope of life was past,
 Conscience (that of all physic works the last)
 Caus'd him to send for Emily in haste.

With her, at his desire, came Palamon;
 Then, on his pillow rais'd, he thus begun.
 "No language can express the smallest part
 "Of what I feel, and suffer in my heart,
 "For you, whom best I love and value most;
 "But to your service I bequeath my ghost;
 "Which from this mortal body when unty'd,
 "Unseen, unheard, shall hover at your side;

“ Nor fright you waking, nor your sleep offend,
“ But wait officious, and your steps attend :
“ How I have lov’d, excuse my falt’ring tongue,
“ My spirits feeble, and my pains are strong :
“ This I may say, I only grieve to die,
“ Because I lose my charming Emily :
“ To die, when Heav’n had put you in my pow’r,
“ Fate could not choose a more malicious hour.
“ What greater curse could envious fortune give,
“ Than just to die, when I began to live ?
“ Vain men ! how vanishing a bliss we crave,
“ Now warm in love, now with’ring in the grave !
“ Never, O never more to see the sun !
“ Still dark, in a damp vault, and still alone !
“ This fate is common ; but I lose my breath
“ Near bliss, and not yet blest’d before my death.
“ Farewel ; but take me dying in your arms,
“ ’Tis all I can enjoy of all your charms :
“ This hand I cannot but in death resign ;
“ Ah, could I live ! but while I live ’tis mine.
“ I feel my end approach, and thus embrac’d,
“ Am pleas’d to die :—but hear me speak my last.
“ Ah ! my sweet foe, for you, and you alone,
“ I broke my faith with injur’d Palamon.

“ But

“ But love the sense of right and wrong confounds,
“ Strong love and proud ambition have no bounds.
“ And much I doubt, should heav’n my life prolong,
“ I should return to justify my wrong :
“ For while my former flames remain within,
“ Repentance is but want of pow’r to sin.
“ With mortal hatred I pursu’d his life,
“ Nor he, nor you, were guilty of the strife ;
“ Nor I, but as I lov’d : yet all combin’d,
“ Your beauty, and my impotence of mind ;
“ And his concurrent flame, that blew my fire ;
“ For still our kindred souls had one desire.
“ He had a moment’s right in point of time ;
“ Had I seen first, then his had been the crime.
“ Fate made it mine, and justify’d his right ;
“ Nor holds this earth a more deserving knight,
“ For virtue, valour, and for noble blood,
“ Truth, honour, all that is compris’d in good ;
“ So help me heav’n, in all the world is none
“ So worthy to be lov’d as Palamon.
“ He loves you too, with such a holy fire,
“ As will not, cannot but with life expire :
“ Our vow’d affections both have often try’d,
“ Nor any love but yours could ours divide.

“ Then by my love’s inviolable band,
“ By my long suff’ring, and my short command,
“ If e’er you plight your vows when I am gone,
“ Have pity on the faithful Palamon.”

This was his last ; for death came on amain,
And exercis’d below his iron reign ;
Then upward to the seat of life he goes ;
Sense fled before him, what he touch’d he froze :
Yet could he not his closing eyes withdraw,
Though less and less of Emily he saw :
So speechless for a little space he lay ;
Then grasp’d the hand he held, and sigh’d his soul away.

But whither went his soul, let such relate
Who search the secrets of the future state :
Divines can say but what themselves believe ;
Strong proofs they have, but not demonstrative :
For, were all plain, then all sides must agree,
And faith itself be lost in certainty.
To live uprightly then is sure the best,
To save ourselves, and not to damn the rest.
The soul of Arcite went, where Heathens go,
Who better live than we, though less they know.

In Palamon a manly grief appears ;
Silent, he wept, ashamed to show his tears :

Emilia

Emilia shriek'd but once, and then, oppress'd
With sorrow, sunk upon her lover's breast :
Till Theseus in his arms convey'd with care,
Far from so sad a sight, the swooning fair.
'Twere loss of time her sorrow to relate ;
Ill bears the sex a youthful lover's fate,
When just approaching to the nuptial state. }
But like a low hung cloud, it rains so fast,
That all at once it falls, and cannot last.
The face of things is chang'd, and Athens now,
That laugh'd so late, becomes the scene of woe :
Matrons and maids, both sexes, ev'ry state,
With tears lament the Knight's untimely fate.
Not greater grief in falling Troy was seen
For Hector's death ; but Hector was not then.
Old men with dust deform'd their hoary hair,
The women beat their breasts, their cheeks they tare.
" Why would'st thou go, with one consent they cry,
" When thou hadst gold enough, and Emily !"

Theseus himself, who should have cheer'd the grief
Of others, wanted now the same relief.
Old Egeus only could revive his son,
Who various changes of the world had known ;
And strange vicissitudes of human fate,
Still alt'ring, never in a steady state :

Good after ill, and after pain delight ;
 Alternate, like the scenes of day and night :
 ‘ Since ev’ry man who lives, is born to die,
 ‘ And none can boast sincere felicity,
 ‘ With equal mind what happens let us bear,
 ‘ Nor joy, nor grieve too much for things beyond our
 care.

‘ Like pilgrims, to th’ appointed place we tend ;
 ‘ The world’s an inn, and death the journey’s end.
 ‘ Ev’n kings but play ; and when their part is done,
 ‘ Some other, worse or better, mount the throne.’
 With words like these the crowd was satisfy’d,
 And so they would have been, had Theseus dy’d.

But he, their King, was lab’ring in his mind
 A fitting place for funeral pomps to find,
 Which were in honour of the dead design’d. }
 And after long debate, at last he found
 (As love itself had mark’d the spot of ground)
 That grove for ever green, that conscious land,
 Where he with Palamon fought hand to hand :
 That where he fed his amorous desires
 With soft complaints, and felt his hottest fires,
 There other flames might waste his earthly part,
 And burn his limbs, where love had burn’d his heart.

This

This once resolv'd, the peasants were enjoin'd
Sere-wood, and firs, and dodder'd oaks to find.
With sounding axes to the grove they go,
Fell, split, and lay the fuel on a row,
Vulcanian food : a bier is next prepar'd,
On which the lifeless body should be rear'd,
Cover'd with cloth of gold, on which was laid
The corpse of Arcite, in like robes array'd.
White gloves were on his hands, and on his head
A wreath of laurel, mix'd with myrtle, spread.
A sword keen-edg'd within his right he held,
The warlike emblem of the conquer'd field :
Bare was his manly visage on the bier :
Menac'd his count'nance ; ev'n in death severe.
Then to the palace-hall they bore the knight,
To lie in solemn state, a public sight.
Groans, cries, and howlings fill the crowded place,
And unaffected sorrow sat on ev'ry face.
Sad Palamon above the rest appears,
In sable garments, dew'd with gushing tears :
His auburn locks on either shoulder flow'd,
Which to the funeral of his friend he vow'd :
But Emily, as chief, was next his side,
A virgin-widow and a mourning bride.

And that the princely obsequies might be
Perform'd according to his high degree,
The steed that bore him living to the fight,
Was trapp'd with polish'd steel, all shining bright,
And cover'd with th' atchievements of the Knight. }
The riders rode abreast, and one his shield,
His lance of cornel-wood another held ;
The third his bow, and, glorious to be behold,
The costly quiver, all of burnish'd gold.
The noblest of the Grecians next appear,
And, weeping, on their shoulders bore the bier ;
With sober pace they march'd, and often staid,
And through the master-street the corpse convey'd.
The houses to their tops with black were spread,
And ev'n the pavements were with mourning hid.
The right side of the pall old Egeus kept,
And on the left the royal Theseus wept :
Each bore a golden bowl of work divine,
With honey fill'd, and milk, and mix'd with ruddy
wine.

Then Palamon, the kinsman of the slain,
And after him appear'd th' illustrious train.
To grace the pomp, came Emily the bright,
With cover'd fire, the funeral pile to light.

With

With high devotion was the service made,
And all the rites of pagan honour paid :
So lofty was the pile, a Parthian bow,
With vigour drawn, must send the shaft below.
The bottom was full twenty fathom broad,
With crackling straw beneath in due proportion
 strow'd.

The fabrick seem'd a wood of rising green,
With sulphur and bitumen cast between,
To feed the flames : the trees were unctuous fir, }
And mountain-ash, the mother of the spear ; }
The mourner-yew, and builder oak were there : }
The beech, the swimming alder, and the plane, }
Hard box, and linden of a softer grain, }
And laurels, which the gods for conqu'ring chiefs }
 ordain.

How they were rank'd, shall rest untold by me,
With nameless nymphs that liv'd in ev'ry tree ;
Nor how the dryads, and the woodland train,
Disherited, ran howling o'er the plain :
Nor how the birds to foreign seats repair'd,
Or beasts, that bolted out, and saw the forest bar'd :
Nor how the ground, now clear'd, with ghastly fright
Beheld the sudden sun, a stranger to the light.

The

The straw, as first I said, was laid below ;
Of chips and sere-wood was the second row ;
The third of greens, and timber newly fell'd ;
The fourth high stage the fragrant odours held,
And pearls and precious stones, and rich array ;
In midst of which, embalm'd, the body lay.
The service sung, the maid with mourning eyes
The stubble fir'd ; the smould'ring flames arise :
This office done, she sunk upon the ground ;
But what she spoke, recover'd from her swoon,
I want the wit in moving words to dress ;
But by themselves the tender sex may guess.
While the devouring fire was burning fast,
Rich jewels in the flames the wealthy cast ;
And some their shields, and some their lances threw,
And gave their warrior's ghost a warrior's due.
Full bowls of wine, of honey, milk, and blood,
Were pour'd upon the pile of burning wood,
And hissing flames receive, and hungry lick the
food.

Then thrice the mounted squadrons ride around
The fire, and Arcite's name they thrice refound :
Hail, and farewell, they shouted thrice amain,
Thrice facing to the left, and thrice they turn'd again :

Still

Still as they turn'd, they beat their clatt'ring shields;
The women mix their cries; and clamour fills the fields.
The warlike wakes continued all the night,
And funeral games were play'd at new returning light:
Who naked wrestled best, besmear'd with oil,
Or who with gauntlets gave or took the foil,
I will not tell you, nor would you attend;
But briefly haste to my long story's end.

I pass the rest; the year was fully mourn'd,
And Palamon long since to Thebes return'd;
When, by the Grecians' general consent,
At Athens Theseus held his parliament:
Among the laws that pass'd, it was decreed,
That conquer'd Thebes from bondage should be freed;
Reserving homage to th' Athenian throne,
To which the sov'reign summon'd Palamon.
Unknowing of the cause, he took his way,
Mournful in mind, and still in black array.

The monarch mounts the throne, and, plac'd on high,
Commands into the court the beauteous Emily:
So call'd, she came; the senate rose, and paid
Becoming rev'rence to the royal maid.
And first soft whispers through th' assembly went:
With silent wonder then they watch'd th' event:

All

All hush'd, the King arose with awful grace;
Deep thought was in his breast, and counsel in his face.
At length he sigh'd; and, having first prepar'd
Th' attentive audience, thus his will declar'd.

‘ The cause and spring of motion, from above,
‘ Hung down on earth the golden chain of love:
‘ Great was th’ effect, and high was his intent,
‘ When peace among the jarring seeds he sent.
‘ Fire, flood, and earth, and air by this were bound,
‘ And love, the common link, the new creation crown’d.
‘ The chain still holds; for though the forms decay,
‘ Eternal matter never wears away:
‘ The same first mover certain bounds has plac’d,
‘ How long those perishable forms shall last;
‘ Nor can they last beyond the time assign’d
‘ By that all-seeing and all-making mind:
‘ Shorten their hours they may; for will is free;
‘ But never pass th’ appointed destiny.
‘ So men oppress’d, when weary of their breath,
‘ Throw off the burden, and suborn their death.
‘ Then since those forms begin, and have their end,
‘ On some unalter’d cause they sure depend:
‘ Parts of the whole are we; but God the whole;
‘ Who gives us life and animating soul.

‘ For

- ‘ For nature cannot from a part derive
- ‘ That being, which the whole can only give :
- ‘ He perfect, stable ; but imperfect we,
- ‘ Subject to change, and diff’rent in degree.
- ‘ Plants, beasts, and man ; and, as our organs are,
- ‘ We more or less of his perfection share.
- ‘ But by a long descent, th’ ethereal fire
- ‘ Corrupts ; and forms, the mortal part, expire :
- ‘ As he withdraws his virtue, so they pass,
- ‘ And the same matter makes another mass :
- ‘ This law th’ omniscient pow’r was pleas’d to give,
- ‘ That ev’ry kind should by succession live :
- ‘ That individuals die, his will ordains ;
- ‘ The propagated species still remains.
- ‘ The monarch oak, the patriarch of the trees,
- ‘ Shoots rising up, and spreads by slow degrees ;
- ‘ Three centuries he grows, and three he stays
- ‘ Supreme in state, and in three more decays :
- ‘ So wears the paving pebble in the street,
- ‘ And towns and tow’rs their fatal periods meet ;
- ‘ So rivers rapid once, now naked lie,
- ‘ Forfaken of their springs, and leave their channels dry.
- ‘ So man, at first a drop, dilates with heat,
- ‘ Then form’d, the little heart begins to beat ;

‘ Secret

- ‘ Secret he feeds, unknowing in the cell ;
- ‘ At length, for hatching ripe, he breaks the shell,
- ‘ And struggles into breath, and cries for aid ;
- ‘ Then, helpless, in his mother’s lap is laid.
- ‘ He creeps, he walks, and, issuing into man,
- ‘ Grudges their life, from whence his own began :
- ‘ Retchless of laws, affects to rule alone,
- ‘ Anxious to reign, and restless on the throne :
- ‘ First vegetive, then feels, and reasons last ;
- ‘ Rich of three souls, and lives all three to waste.
- ‘ Some thus ; but thousands more in flow’r of age,
- ‘ For few arrive to run the latter stage.
- ‘ Sunk in the first, in battle some are slain,
- ‘ And others whelm’d beneath the stormy main.
- ‘ What makes all this, but Jupiter the king,
- ‘ At whose command we perish, and we spring ?
- ‘ Then ’tis our best, since thus ordain’d to die,
- ‘ To make a virtue of necessity.
- ‘ Take what he gives, since to rebel is vain ;
- ‘ The bad grows better, which we well sustain ;
- ‘ And could we choose the time, and choose aright,
- ‘ ’Tis best to die, our honour at the height.
- ‘ When we have done our ancestors no shame,
- ‘ But serv’d our friends, and well secur’d our fame ;
- ‘ Then

- ‘ Then should we wish our happy life to close,
 - ‘ And leave no more for fortune to dispose :
 - ‘ So should we make our death a glad relief
 - ‘ From future shame, from sickness, and from grief.
 - ‘ Enjoying while we live the present hour,
 - ‘ And dying in our excellence and flow’r.
 - ‘ Then round our death-bed ev’ry friend should run,
 - ‘ And joyous of our conquest early won :
 - ‘ While the malicious world with envious tears
 - ‘ Should grudge our happy end, and wish it theirs.
 - ‘ Since then our Arcite is with honour dead,
 - ‘ Why should we mourn, that he so soon is freed,
 - ‘ Or call untimely, what the gods decreed ?
 - ‘ With grief as just, a friend may be deplor’d,
 - ‘ From foul prison to free air restor’d.
 - ‘ Ought he to thank his kinsman, or his wife,
 - ‘ Could tears recall him into wretched life ?
 - ‘ Their sorrow hurts themselves ; on him is lost ;
 - ‘ And, worse than both, offends his happy ghost.
 - ‘ What then remains, but, after past annoy,
 - ‘ To take the good vicissitude of joy ?
 - ‘ To thank the gracious gods for what they give,
 - ‘ Possess our souls, and while we live, to live ?
 - ‘ Ordain we then two sorrows to combine,
 - ‘ And in one point th’ extremes of grief to join ;
- ‘ That

‘ That thence resulting joy may be renew’d,
‘ As jarring notes in harmony conclude.
‘ Then I propose that Palamon shall be
‘ In marriage join’d with beauteous Emily;
‘ For which already I have gain’d th’ assent
‘ Of my free people in full parliament.
‘ Long love to her has borne the faithful Knight,
‘ And well deserv’d, had fortune done him right:
‘ ’Tis time to mend her fault; since Emily,
‘ By Arcite’s death, from former vows is free.
‘ If you, fair sister, ratify th’ accord,
‘ And take him for your husband, and your lord,
‘ ’Tis no dishonour to confer your grace
‘ On one descended from a royal race:
‘ And, were he less, yet years of service past
‘ From grateful souls exact reward at last:
‘ Pity is heav’n’s and yours: nor can she find
‘ A throne so soft as in a woman’s mind.’

He said; she blush’d; and, as o’er-aw’d by might,
Seem’d to give Theseus what she gave the Knight.

Then, turning to the Theban, thus he said;

‘ Small arguments are needful to persuade
‘ Your temper to comply with my command;
And speaking thus, he gave Emilia’s hand.

Smil’d

Smil'd Venus, to behold her own true Knight
Obtain the conquest, though he lost the fight;
And bless'd with nuptial bliss the sweet laborious
night. }

Eros, and Anteros, on either side,
One fir'd the bridegroom, and one warm'd the bride;
And long-attending Hymen from above
Show'r'd on the bed the whole Idalian grove.
All of a tenor was their after-life,
No day discolour'd with domestic strife;
No jealousy, but mutual truth believ'd,
Secure repose, and kindness undeceiv'd.
Thus Heav'n, beyond the compass of his thought,
Sent him the blessing he so dearly bought.

So may the Queen of Love long duty bless,
And all true lovers find the same success.

END OF VOL. I.

